

2 Corinthians

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- **A synopsis of 2 Corinthians**

2 Corinthians 1 Page 12

Themes of the chapter

- Comfort (parakaleo/paraklesis) as a keyword—rooted in Hebrew nacham (change of attitude/position, comfort after sorrow, replacement of old by new). It characterises the New Covenant (replacing the Old, which ended in Christ's death and resurrection). The Comforter is primarily Christ (the Messiah), with the Holy Spirit as the abiding Paraclete within believers. Comfort arises from tribulation, producing patience/devotion and leading to greater glory (cf. Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17).
- Tribulation and consolation are intertwined: Paul's sufferings (e.g., deadly peril in Asia) qualify him to comfort others. Affliction produces endurance, patience, and eternal weight of glory—salvation in its fuller sense (not just initial regeneration but soul deliverance and future bodily redemption).
- The day of the Lord Jesus (or day of Christ)—the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10), where believers' works are evaluated for reward (positive for faithful service, loss for unfaithfulness). It is a day of manifestation, rejoicing for those who stand firm, and accountability—not condemnation for salvation (already secure).
- Paul's changed plans—he intended to visit Corinth twice for a "second benefit" but refrained to spare them (longsuffering, like the Lord's). This was not levity or fleshly inconsistency; his word (preaching) was faithful, as God's promises in Christ are yea and Amen (reliable, fulfilled).
- Sealing, anointing, earnest—God establishes, anoints (appoints as kings/priests under the New Covenant), seals (authenticates ownership), and gives the Spirit as earnest/guarantee of inheritance—pointing to future redemption of the body and sonship (birthright/glory at Christ's return).
- No dominion over faith—Paul and co-workers are helpers of joy, not lords; believers stand by faith, not human authority.

It emphasises the heavenly position of believers (citizens of heaven, firstfruits of new creation), the New Covenant blessings (grace, peace, comfort, liberty), the contrast with carnal living (Corinthians' issue), and the ultimate goal: manifestation before Christ's judgment seat for reward, flowing from surrender and Spirit-led walk.

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Paul's Decision Not to Visit in Sorrow (2:1–4)

Paul had resolved not to come again to you in heaviness (sorrow/grief), a deliberate choice to spare the Corinthians further pain (cf. 1:23).

This subtly rebukes them: any visit would inevitably have been sorrowful due to their unresolved issues, so he stayed away. His aim was never to grieve them but to bring joy—he and his companions were helpers of their joy (1:24).

A visit marked by rebuke would benefit no one: if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me? (v. 2).

He wrote earlier (likely referring to 1 Corinthians or a lost “severe” letter) precisely to avoid arriving in sorrow and instead find mutual rejoicing: my joy is the joy of you all (v. 3).

That letter was written out of much affliction and anguish of heart... with many tears (v. 4)—not to grieve them, but to demonstrate the abundant love he has for them.

The two Corinthian epistles together can be seen as a profound (though often unreciprocated) declaration of love, mirroring Christ’s love for a disappointing church.

Restoration of the Penitent Sinner (2:5–11) Paul addresses the offender from 1 Corinthians 5 (the man in immoral union), who caused grief not... to me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all (v. 5)—the sorrow affected the whole community, not just Paul. The punishment inflicted by the many (church discipline via non-association) has been sufficient (v. 6).

Now the time has come for the opposite: forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow (v. 7).

Paul urges them to confirm your love toward him (v. 8) and so prove their obedience in all things (v. 9).

He aligns himself fully: to whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also... for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ (v. 10).

Failure to restore would give Satan... advantage through division (v. 11).

The principle is biblical: discipline aims at repentance and restoration, not permanent exclusion (cf. 2 Timothy 2:24–26).

Fellowship is individual and relational, not merely ecclesiastical—believers may still meet in the same assembly but should not keep company with the unrepentant until change occurs.

Paul’s Unrest and Travel (2:12–13) In Troas, a door was opened for preaching, yet Paul had no rest in my spirit because he could not find Titus. He left for Macedonia instead of proceeding to Corinth as planned. This episode (not clearly datable in Acts) underscores his emotional investment in the Corinthians and the ongoing tension over his changed travel plans.

The Triumph and Fragrance of Apostolic Ministry (2:14–17)

From here through chapter 5, Paul shifts to core themes of his ministry. Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ (v. 14)—not dependent on visible success or circumstances, but on faithfully proclaiming the word of God in Christ. This is spiritual warfare: light confronting darkness. God maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place (v. 14)—the knowledge of Christ spreads like fragrance, whether received or rejected. To God, believers (Paul and companions) are a sweet savour of Christ (v. 15)—a living sacrifice acceptable to Him (cf. Romans 12:1; Hebrews 13:15)—in them that are saved, and in them that perish (v. 15).

To the one it is the savour of death unto death (hardening, condemnation); to the other the savour of life unto life (salvation, eternal life). And who is sufficient for these things? (v. 16)—answered in 3:5: our sufficiency is of God, who makes us able ministers of the new testament (3:6).

Paul contrasts himself with many, which corrupt the word of God (v. 17)—those who dilute, falsify, or peddle it for gain (cf. Isaiah 1:22; 2 Peter 2:3).

They mix water with wine, adapting truth to human agendas or commerce. Paul speaks as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God... in Christ—purely, Godward, without ulterior motives. The theme of uncovered, undiluted proclamation of the word runs through to chapter 4: no veiling, no compromise, no trade in the gospel.

Principal Themes

- Love amid disappointment — Paul's tears and restraint reflect Christ's patient love for a faltering church.
- Discipline and restoration — Biblical correction seeks repentance and comfort, not destruction; Satan exploits unforgiveness and division.
- Triumph in proclamation — Victory lies in faithfully manifesting Christ's knowledge everywhere, regardless of response; the gospel is savour of life or death, always to God's glory.
- Sufficiency from God — No human adequacy for such weighty ministry; God equips those who serve the New Covenant without corrupting the word.

The chapter highlights Paul's pastoral heart, the gravity of preaching unadulterated truth, the relational (not merely institutional) nature of church discipline, and the ultimate Godward orientation of ministry—even when it divides or hardens. The passage prepares for the profound New Covenant contrasts in chapters 3–5.

2 Corinthians 3 Page 51

Sufficiency of God – New Covenant Ministry & Unveiled Glory

Paul rejects any need for letters of commendation (v. 1) – human credentials or certificates of reliability are unnecessary. The Corinthians themselves are his living epistle, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart (vv. 2–3).

His authority rests on God's work through him and on the evident fruit of his labour (the Corinthian church itself). His sufficiency is of God (v. 5), not self or human approval. God has made him and his companions able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life (v. 6).

The Old Covenant (engraved on stone, a ministration of death and condemnation) had glory – so much that Israel could not steadfastly behold Moses' shining face (vv. 7–11) – yet that glory was passing and is now eclipsed by the excelling glory of the New Covenant (vv. 9–11).

The Old was temporary and veiled; the New is abiding and unveiled.

Because we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech (v. 12) – no veil, as Moses used (v. 13).

Their minds were blinded; the same veil remains over the Old Testament when read by those who do not turn to the Lord (vv. 14–15).

Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away (v. 16) – conversion precedes unveiling, not the reverse. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (v. 17). The New Covenant brings freedom from law, sin, and death.

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (v. 18). We reflect (not merely look into) His glory and are progressively transformed into His likeness – inward renewal by the Spirit, not human effort or law-keeping.

2 Corinthians 4 Page 61

Treasure in Earthen Vessels – Light in Darkness

Paul does not faint in this ministry because he has received mercy (v. 1).

He has renounced the hidden things of dishonesty – shameful coverings, craftiness, deceitful handling of the word (v. 2) – and instead manifests the truth openly, commending himself to every conscience in God's sight.

If the gospel is hid, it is hid to those who are lost (v. 3), whose minds the god of this world has blinded, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ (who is the image of God) shine on them (v. 4).

Paul preaches not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake (v. 5).

God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (v. 6).

This echoes Genesis 1:3 but applies to the New Covenant: God's creative word brings light – the knowledge of His glory revealed in the face (Person/work) of the risen, glorified Jesus.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels (v. 7) – the surpassing power is God's, not ours. Affliction presses us on every side (troubled, perplexed, persecuted, cast down), yet we are not distressed... not in despair... not forsaken... not destroyed (vv. 8–9).

We bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus (the outworking of death in our mortal flesh), that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body (v. 10).

We are delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, so His life may appear in our mortal flesh (v. 11). Death worketh in us, but life in you (v. 12).

Having the same spirit of faith (Ps. 116:10), we also believe, and therefore speak (v. 13). We know God, who raised Jesus, shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you (v. 14).

All this is for your sakes, so grace may abound through thanksgiving to God's glory (v. 15).

For which cause we faint not (v. 16). Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (v. 17).

We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen – the seen are temporal, the unseen eternal (v. 18).

Principle Themes in Chapters 3–4

- New vs. Old Covenant — Stone tablets / letter / death / condemnation / passing glory / veil vs. fleshy hearts / Spirit / life / righteousness / abiding excelling glory / unveiled face / liberty.
- Sufficiency & Ministry — Not human credentials, but God-given; not self, but divine power in weakness; ministers of the Spirit, not lords; unveiled, plain proclamation without corruption or compromise.
- Glory & Transformation — Beholding/reflecting the Lord's glory → progressive change into His image (inward renewal); light of the gospel of Christ's glory shining in hearts despite affliction.

- Treasure in Weakness — God’s surpassing power in frail earthen vessels; bearing Christ’s dying → manifesting His life; light affliction → eternal weight of glory; focus on unseen eternal realities.
- Pastoral Urgency — Paul’s tears, restraint, and plain speech flow from love; the Corinthians’ resistance (veil, carnality) hinders the Spirit’s work; true ministry serves Christ, not self, and produces life amid death.

The chapters contrast the fading, veiled Old Covenant with the surpassing, liberating, life-giving New Covenant, stressing inward renewal, unveiled beholding of Christ’s glory, and faithful ministry in weakness – all to God’s glory through grace abounding in thanksgiving. The veil is removed only when one turns to the Lord; transformation follows surrender and Spirit-worked renewal.

2 Corinthians 5 – My favourite chapter in the Bible Page 95

Our Heavenly Habitation & Judgment Seat of Christ

Paul connects the eternal weight of glory (4:17) to the believer’s future body.

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved (v. 1) — not primarily death, but the loosing/dissolution of this temporary, corruptible body at the rapture of the Church — we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This “house” is the glorified body already prepared by God (a permanent dwelling replacing the perishable tabernacle/tent). It belongs to the new creation, not the old; it is invisible now but will be revealed.

In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our heavenly house (v. 2), that mortality might be swallowed up of life (v. 4).

We do not desire to be unclothed (naked, stripped of glory) or merely clothed (basic glorification), but clothed upon — over-clothed with surpassing glory.

Mortality is not merely removed but absorbed/transformed into eternal life. The old contributes to the new (swallowed up), giving present sanctification lasting purpose and reward.

God... hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit (v. 5) — the Spirit as down-payment/guarantee of this future inheritance/redemption of the body. We are confident: whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (v. 6); we walk by faith, not by sight (v. 7).

We are willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (v. 8), yet we labour (strive eagerly) that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him (v. 9) — well-pleasing to Him.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (v. 10) — inevitable, collective, yet individual reckoning. Every one receives according to that he hath done (works flowing from faith or unbelief), whether good or bad. Good works = those proceeding from faith and service under the New Covenant; bad = those from unbelief/self, even if outwardly religious. Reward varies: full (clothed upon), partial (clothed), or none (naked/shameful). Nakedness involves eternal loss and regret (cf. Esau, Hebrews 12; 1 Corinthians 3).

This is not loss of salvation but loss of inheritance/glory. Knowing the terror of the Lord (v. 11), Paul persuades men — solemn warning against unfaithfulness.

Key Theological & Practical Emphases

- Heavenly vs. Earthly — Present mortal body (tabernacle/temporary temple) vs. future glorified body (eternal building from God). The old is loosed/dissolved at the rapture; the new is already prepared and partially built now through inward renewal (4:16).
- Present Renewal → Future Manifestation — Inward man renewed day by day → outward man perishes → glory revealed at judgment seat. Sanctification now produces lasting fruit (weight of glory); works are tested (good/bad), not for salvation but for reward/inheritance.
- Faithful Ministry & Accountability — Paul's sufficiency, plain speech, renunciation of coverings, and endurance flow from love of Christ and fear of judgment. He persuades men to reconciliation (vv. 18–20) and lives not for self but for Christ (vv. 14–15).
- New Creation Reality — If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (v. 17) — old things passed away; all things new. Fellowship is spiritual, not fleshly; we know no man (nor Christ) after the flesh. Reconciliation is God's work in Christ (vv. 18–19), entrusted to us as ministry/word of reconciliation (v. 20).
- Christ's Substitution — He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin (v. 21) — not merely bearing sins but made sin (likeness of sinful flesh, condemned in the flesh). Purpose: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. His humiliation → our justification; His death → our new life.

The chapter stress the rapture/judgment seat connection, the causal link between present faithfulness/sanctification and future glory/reward, the solemnity of appearing before Christ (terror yet hope), and living unto Him who died and rose — not self, not law, not appearance, but inward reality in the New Covenant. The earthly tabernacle's dissolution opens the way to our heavenly building, earned through works judged at Christ's seat.

2 Corinthians 6: Page 167

Ministry in the Acceptable Time – Separation & Dedication

Paul begins by urging the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain (v. 1).

The quotation from Isaiah 49:8 — now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation (v. 2)

It proves that we live in the prophesied era when salvation has gone to the Gentiles (Brit Am / ends of the earth), while Israel as a people has not yet been gathered. This is the hidden beginning of the Messianic Kingdom: firstfruits under the New Covenant, with responsibility resting on believers (the Church) to preserve and proclaim the Word.

Nobility obliges: we must live faithfully under grace, not law.

As ministers of God (vv. 3–10), Paul lists the marks of authentic ministry: endurance through afflictions, necessities, distresses, stripes, imprisonments, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings (negative), contrasted with pureness, knowledge, longsuffering, kindness, Holy Ghost, love unfeigned, word of truth, power of God, armour of righteousness (positive), and paradoxes — honour/dishonour, evil/good report, deceivers/true, unknown/well known, dying/living, chastened/not killed, sorrowful/rejoicing, poor/making many rich, having nothing/possessing all things (vv. 8–10). This reflects the inward conflict and the twofold nature of the believer under the New Covenant.

Paul appeals from the heart: our mouth is open... our heart is enlarged (v. 11);

ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels (v. 12).
 He urges reciprocal enlargement: be ye also enlarged (v. 13).
 The chapter culminates in separation: be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers (v. 14)
 no fellowship between righteousness/unrighteousness, light/darkness, Christ/Belial, believer/infidel, temple of God/idols (vv. 14–16).
 We are the temple of the living God (v. 16), in whom He dwells and walks; we are His people (quoted from Old Testament promises to Israel, now applied to the Church).
 Come out... be ye separate... touch not the unclean thing (v. 17, from Isaiah 52:11), and God will receive us as Father and make us sons and daughters (v. 18, from Jeremiah 31).
 Having these promises, cleanse ourselves from filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (7:1) — dedication, wholeness, service under the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 7: Page 188

Comfort Through Titus – Godly Sorrow & Repentance

Paul expresses joy and comfort over Titus's report from Corinth (vv. 5–7).
 Despite external troubles (fightings without, fears within), God comforted him through Titus's arrival and the news of the Corinthians' response. Paul had written a sorrowful letter (likely 1 Corinthians), not to grieve but to express love (vv. 8–9).
 He rejoices not in their sorrow, but that it was godly sorrow leading to repentance to salvation not to be repented of (v. 10).
 Worldly sorrow works death. Their godly sorrow produced carefulness, clearing of yourselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, revenge (v. 11) — proving them clear in this matter (the offender from 1 Corinthians 5).
 Paul wrote not primarily for the offender or victim, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you (v. 12). The comfort was mutual: Paul rejoiced in their comfort, and Titus's spirit was refreshed by them (vv. 13–16).

2 Corinthians 8–9: Page 194

The Collection – Grace, Liberality & Equality

Paul now addresses the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (ongoing since 1 Corinthians 16). He begins with the example of the Macedonian churches (vv. 1–5): despite great trial of affliction and deep poverty, their abundance of joy abounded to riches of liberality (v. 2).
 They gave beyond their power, willingly, even begging to participate in the fellowship of ministering to the saints (vv. 3–4).
 Above all, they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (v. 5).
 Titus had begun this grace among the Corinthians; Paul urges him to complete it (v. 6).
 As they abound in faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence, and love, they should also abound in this grace (v. 7).
 Paul speaks not by commandment but to prove the sincerity of your love by comparing it with others' forwardness (v. 8).
 The supreme example is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ: though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich (v. 9) — not merely incarnation/death, but His present self-limitation for the Church.

Paul gives advice: finish what you began a year ago (vv. 10–11). A willing mind is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not (v. 12). The goal is equality (vv. 13–15):

your abundance supplies their want now; their abundance may supply yours later. This echoes the manna: he that gathered much had nothing over; he that gathered little had no lack (v. 15, from Exodus 16).

God supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, multiplying seed sown and increasing the fruits of righteousness (vv. 10–11).

He is able to make all grace abound so we have sufficiency in all things and abound to every good work (v. 8).

The collection not only meets needs but overflows in thanksgivings unto God (vv. 11–12), glorifying Him for their professed subjection unto the gospel and liberal distribution (v. 13).

The saints in Jerusalem will glorify God and long for the Corinthians because of the exceeding grace of God in you (v. 14).

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift (v. 15) — eternal life in Christ.

Key Principal Themes in Chapters 8–9

- Acceptable Time / Day of Salvation — We live in the prophesied era (Isaiah 49:8) when salvation goes to the Gentiles (Brit Am / ends of the earth); Israel not yet gathered. This is the hidden beginning of the Messianic Kingdom; we are firstfruits with priestly responsibility.
- New Covenant Ministry — Ministers of the Spirit (not letter/law), of righteousness, reconciliation, peace. No unequal yoking with unbelievers; come out, be separate, touch not unclean. We are God's temple; He dwells/walks in us.
- Separation & Holiness — No fellowship between righteousness/unrighteousness, light/darkness, Christ/Belial, temple/idols. Perfect holiness in fear of God — dedication/wholeness to the Lord.
- Godly Sorrow & Repentance — Leads to salvation; produces carefulness, zeal, revenge (retribution), proving clearness. Worldly sorrow works death.
- Collection as Grace & Test — Macedonian example: joy in poverty → liberality; first gave themselves to the Lord. Corinthians urged to abound in this grace as proof of love/subjection. Cheerful, willing giving → God's abundant grace, sufficiency, thanksgiving, glory to God.
- Christ's Self-Giving — Rich → poor for us; we become rich through His poverty. Present self-limitation for the Church motivates our giving/service.

We live in the prophesied acceptable time, priestly responsibility under the New Covenant, separation from unbelief/worldly yokes, godly sorrow leading to repentance, and practical liberality as proof of dedication — all flowing from Christ's self-impoverishment and God's abundant grace. It tests sincerity and promotes equality/care among saints, ultimately to God's glory.

2 Corinthians 10 Page 207

Paul's Apostolic Authority & Spiritual Warfare

Paul shifts to direct confrontation, speaking in the meekness and gentleness of Christ (v. 1)

yet he is base (humble/lowly) in presence but bold in absence (v. 1).
 He hopes not to be bold in person with the confidence he intends to use against some who think he walks according to the flesh (v. 2).
 He walks in the flesh but does not war after the flesh (v. 3).
 His weapons are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds (v. 4)
 casting down imaginations (reasonings), every high thing exalting itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (v. 5).
 He is ready to revenge all disobedience when their obedience is fulfilled (v. 6).
 The Corinthians judge after the outward appearance (v. 7).
 If anyone trusts he is Christ's, let him think again: as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's (v. 7).
 Paul's authority (given by the Lord) is for edification, not destruction (v. 8)
 he will not be ashamed to boast in it if needed. He refuses to terrify them by letters (vv. 9–10),
 for his letters are weighty and powerful, yet his bodily presence is weak and speech contemptible (v. 10).
 Let such a one think: such as we are in word by letters when absent, such will we be in deed when present (v. 11).
 Paul will not make himself of the number or compare himself with those who commend themselves (v. 12)
 measuring/comparing themselves by themselves is unwise. He boasts only according to the measure of the rule God distributed to him — a measure that reaches even to Corinth (v. 13), for he came as far as them in preaching the Gospel (v. 14).
 He does not boast in other men's labours (v. 15)
 but hopes, when their faith increases, to be enlarged by them according to his rule, to preach in regions beyond without boasting in another's line (v. 16).
 He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (v. 17);
 not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth (v. 18).

2 Corinthians 11 Page 221

Paul's Jealousy, Sufferings & False Apostles

Paul wishes they could bear with him a little in my folly (v. 1) — and they do.
 He is jealous over them with godly jealousy: he has espoused them to one husband to present them as a chaste virgin to Christ (v. 2).
 He fears their minds may be corrupted from the simplicity in Christ, as the serpent beguiled Eve through subtlety (v. 3).
 If someone preaches another Jesus, another spirit, or another gospel, they might well bear with him (v. 4) — ironic, since there is no other.
 Paul supposes he is not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles (v. 5).
 Though rude in speech, he is not in knowledge; he has been manifest among them in all things (v. 6).
 Did he offend by abasing himself to exalt them, preaching the Gospel freely (v. 7)?
 He robbed other churches, taking wages to serve them (v. 8);
 when present and in want, he was chargeable to no man — Macedonia supplied (v. 9).
 He kept himself unburdensome and will continue (v. 9).

As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop this boasting in Achaia (v. 10) — not because he loves them not (God knows) (v. 11), but to cut off occasion from those who desire it, so they may be found even as we (v. 12). Such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ (v. 13). No marvel — Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (v. 14). Thus it is no great thing if his ministers be transformed as ministers of righteousness — whose end shall be according to their works (v. 15). Paul again asks them to bear with him in folly (v. 16) — receive him as a fool so he may boast a little (v. 16). What he speaks, he speaks not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting (v. 17). Seeing many glory after the flesh, he will too (v. 18). They suffer fools gladly, being wise (v. 19); they suffer if someone brings them into bondage, devours them, takes of them, exalts himself, or smites them on the face (v. 20). He speaks to their reproach as though weak, yet wherein any is bold (foolishly), he is bold also (v. 21). Are they Hebrews? so am I. Israelites? so am I. Seed of Abraham? so am I (v. 22). Ministers of Christ? (foolishly) I am more — in labours more abundant, stripes above measure, prisons more frequent, deaths oft (v. 23). Five times forty stripes save one from the Jews (v. 24); thrice beaten with rods, once stoned, thrice shipwrecked, a night and day in the deep (v. 25); perils in waters/robbers/countrymen/heathen/city/wilderness/sea/false brethren (v. 26); weariness/painfulness/watchings/hunger/thirst/fastings/cold/nakedness (v. 27). Besides outward things, daily the care of all the churches (v. 28). Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? (v. 29). If he must glory, he glories in his infirmities (v. 30). God knows he lies not (v. 31). In Damascus, under Aretas, the governor sought to apprehend him; he escaped in a basket through a window (vv. 32–33).

Key Principal Themes in Chapters 10–11

- Apostolic Authority — Not self-commended or carnal; from the Lord for edification (building up), not destruction. Paul refuses to compare himself with self-commendators; he boasts only in his God-given measure/rule (reaching Corinth) and in the Lord.
- Spiritual Warfare — Not carnal weapons but mighty through God — pulling down strongholds/imaginings/high things against God's knowledge, bringing every thought into captivity to Christ's obedience. Ready to avenge disobedience when obedience is fulfilled.
- Outward vs. Inward — Corinthians judge after appearance (Paul base/weak in presence, contemptible speech); Paul walks in flesh but wars not after flesh. He glories in infirmities/weakness; true commendation is from the Lord.
- Godly Jealousy & Simplicity — Paul's godly jealousy: espoused them to one husband (himself in responsibility) to present them chaste to Christ. Fears their minds corrupted from simplicity in Christ (as Eve by serpent subtlety).

- False Apostles — Pseudo-apostles, deceitful workers, transforming into apostles of Christ (as Satan into angel of light). Ministers of Satan transformed as ministers of righteousness — end according to works.
- Sufferings as Proof — Long catalogue of afflictions (stripes, prisons, perils, care of all churches) proves authentic ministry. Weakness = power of God; glory in infirmities.

The chapters emphasise Paul's God-given apostolic measure/authority for edification, spiritual warfare against carnal reasonings/strongholds, rejection of outward appearance, godly jealousy for purity/simplicity in Christ, exposure of false apostles (Satan's ministers), and authentic ministry proven in weakness/sufferings — all to defend the New Covenant truth against fleshly/carnal opposition in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 12 Page 245

Visions & Revelations – The Thorn in the Flesh

Paul reluctantly boasts (foolishly) of visions and revelations of the Lord (v. 1).

He speaks distantly of a man in Christ (himself) caught up fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body, God knows) to the third heaven—paradise—where he heard unspeakable words it is not lawful (not permitted/possible) for a man to utter (vv. 2–4).

He glories in such a one, yet of himself he glories only in mine infirmities (v. 5), lest any think of him above what they see/hear (v. 6).

Lest he be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given him a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him (v. 7).

Thrice he besought the Lord that it might depart (v. 8).

The Lord answered: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness (v. 9).

Paul therefore glories most gladly in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses for Christ's sake — for when I am weak, then am I strong (v. 10).

2 Corinthians 13 Page 284

Final Admonitions & Benediction

Paul is coming the third time (v. 1) — every word established by two or three witnesses (v. 1).

He foretold and foretells: if he comes again, he will not spare those who heretofore sinned and have not repented of uncleanness, fornication, lasciviousness (v. 2).

They seek proof of Christ speaking in me — not weak toward them, but mighty in them (v. 3).

Though Christ was crucified through weakness, yet He lives by the power of God; we too are weak in him, but live with him by the power of God toward them (v. 4).

Examine yourselves, prove your own selves: know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (v. 5).

He trusts they shall know we are not reprobates (v. 6). He prays they do no evil — not that they appear approved, but that they do that which is honest (good), though we be as reprobates (v. 7).

We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth (v. 8). He is glad when we are weak and ye are strong — he wishes their perfection (maturity) (v. 9). He writes absent lest present he use sharpness according to the power the Lord gave him to edification, and not to destruction (v. 10).

Finally: farewell (be glad). Be perfect (mature), be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace — and the God of love and peace shall be with you (v. 11).

Greet one another with an holy kiss; all the saints salute you (v. 12).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen (v. 13–14).

Key Principal Themes in Chapters 12–13

- Visions & Revelations — Paul's rapture to the third heaven/paradise (unspeakable words, not lawful to utter) confirms his apostolic calling — yet he glories only in infirmities/weakness.
- Thorn in the Flesh — A messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest exalted above measure. Thrice besought — answered: My grace is sufficient... my strength made perfect in weakness. Power of Christ rests on weakness; when I am weak, then am I strong.
- Self-Examination — Examine yourselves... know ye not... Christ is in you (except reprobates). Proof of faith/maturity: Christ's indwelling life manifest.
- Edification vs. Destruction — Apostolic power/authority for building up, not tearing down. Sharpness if needed, but preference for edification.
- Maturity & Unity — Be perfect (mature), be of one mind, live in peace — God of love/peace with you. Holiness, comfort, gladness flow from New Covenant life.
- Grace, Love, Communion — Climactic benediction: grace of Christ, love of God, communion of Holy Ghost — overlapping terms for the unified life under grace (not law), in the Spirit.

Your notes emphasise Paul's reluctance to boast (foolishly) in visions/revelations, glorying only in weakness (thorn = Satan's messenger to prevent pride), Christ's power perfected in infirmity, self-examination (Christ in you?), apostolic authority for edification (not destruction), and the call to maturity/unity/peace under grace — culminating in the benediction of grace, love, and communion as the normal life-position of believers. The epistle closes with the God of love/peace present where these virtues are pursued.

2 Corinthians 1:1 –2

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:
2 Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, the sender. This lends a certain authority to the letter, especially since it mentions his calling: he is an apostle, a sent one, of Jesus Christ. He has been sent by Jesus Christ. This is literally true, for the apostles are those sent by the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why they bear this name. We shall encounter this point at greater length later in the letter: an apostle is only an apostle if he has had a direct, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus. This is emphasised in these letters to the Corinthians because people were questioning Paul's authority. True, he had received a theological education, but that was

within Judaism. By biblical standards, Christianity and Judaism do not go together; in practice they stand in opposition to each other.

Be that as it may, the Corinthians doubted Paul's apostleship, firstly because he did not do his work full-time—he also worked at times to support himself—and secondly because he was probably a small man. His appearance was certainly not impressive. Moreover, his preaching did not conform to human tradition. For example, in Galatians 1:11 it says that the gospel is not after man. It was not invented by man but comes from God. People did not find that preaching pleasant. The same is still true today.

Paul's preaching holds that as believers on earth we have nothing to seek here. We are here, and we are to be the light of the world, yet we have become citizens of heaven and have received a position there. We have a position there, a walk, a ministry, and of course a future and an inheritance. Whatever we have to do with this world all flows from our heavenly position as firstfruits of a New Covenant, of a new creation, and even of the Messianic Kingdom. Hence the call to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called (Ephesians 4:1).

Ephesians 4:1

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

Paul was therefore sent by Jesus Christ, by the will of God. It was not Paul's will, but God's will, and by this he excuses himself and at the same time gains even greater authority. You read the same in Galatians 1. He was zealous for the traditions of the fathers, for the Jewish religion, but God had called him. He could not do much about that, at least not consciously. God had placed him in this position. That is why he writes these letters with some boldness, even though he knows full well that the Corinthians will not appreciate it.

Timothy is also named as sender. When Paul first preached the gospel in Corinth, after leaving Athens, Timothy accompanied him. They both preached there. If Paul's authority was not sufficient, then Timothy's might serve as well. At any rate, he was known to the Corinthians.

He is called "the brother." That might seem rather superfluous, since all believers are brothers. To state in this letter that Timothy is also a regenerate brother seems a bit excessive. The term must therefore carry more weight than that alone. Here it is used to indicate Timothy as a fellow-worker—essentially a fellow-heir. That amounts to much the same thing. They share joint responsibility. Paul uses this word in that sense elsewhere, and not only for Timothy.

The letter is addressed to the church of God which is at Corinth. One might infer from this that God maintains quite a number of churches. They are sometimes called local churches. That cannot be, however, for there is only one church. There exists but one church, and of that church there is only one Head, namely the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

That is the one body of Christ. This imagery is worked out at length in the first epistle to the Corinthians, where the church is spoken of as one body with many members, yet all

those many members make up precisely one body. The body is a unity, but it is a composite unity. A body is only a body because various members are together in that one body. Hence a union, an institution, or a council is also called a body.

The church does consist of many members, but not of many bodies. A “local church” is a convenient concept, but fundamentally incorrect.

The church is one body and one Spirit, in the sense that the same life is present in all those different parts of the body. That is why it is one body. The same applies to our own physical body: it is obviously one body, with different parts, all belonging to that one body because the same life is in them. If that were not the case with some members, those parts would naturally fall away.

We have all been baptised by one Spirit. We are all one because we have all received the same Spirit. We have been born again—that is, born of the Spirit. In this new birth we received the Holy Spirit. Because we all receive the same Spirit, it means we all belong to one and the same body.

This thought has suffered under many teachings, which makes it seem complicated in retrospect. Yet it is not so complex, for as believers we have all received the life of Christ and therefore all belong to the same body of Christ, namely the church. Wherever in the world you live makes no difference to this principle.

The believers in Corinth simply lived in Corinth, so they can be addressed as the church of God insofar as it is in Corinth.

The letter is written to believers in Corinth. They belong to the church of God. The content of the letter concerns the conditions there in Corinth, but that does not make Corinth a separate church. In this connection people also speak of the local manifestation of the church. That too is a dangerous expression, for it attempts once more to organise a local church and bring it under one leadership.

In any case, there is but one church; it is supplied with organs by or from the Head.

The letter was sent to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia. Though they lived carnally, that does not alter the fact that they were saints. Nowadays one can only become a saint posthumously—not immediately after death, for that process usually takes several centuries. In the Bible and before God, every believer is a saint.

A saint is by definition one set apart for the service of God, quite apart from any other meaning the word may have in English. Ultimately it is the translation of the Hebrew concept of holy, which carries that meaning.

“Sanctify unto me the sons of Aaron.” This does not mean Moses had to make those sons holy, but that they were set apart for the service of God. Moses was to appoint them to the priesthood. Thus they became priests. Did they need training for that office? Probably to practise it, but not to become priests. From the moment the Lord said this to Moses, they were born as priests. Anyone descended from Aaron was born a priest and then, at the age of twenty, had to present himself to the head of the family, the high priest. He could then say, “I am a priest, and here I am to do your will.” Those were also the words of the Lord Jesus at His resurrection, when He presented Himself to His Father to register for His service as High Priest of the New Covenant.

The Levites were born priests and were therefore holy on that basis. Indeed, there were even holy objects—not because they behaved properly, but because they were dedicated to the service of God.

So it is with us. We have been born again and on that ground we are dedicated to the service of God. We have been made able to be ministers of the new testament (2 Corinthians 3:6). Therefore we are holy. Whether in the practical conduct of our lives we also walk holily is another matter. We are holy, and therefore we must become holy. We are holy in spirit because we are born again, and the intention is that we also become holy in soul, in our walk. That is the order. What we have become by nature through the new birth should also be lived out and experienced in practice. Hence we must first know who we are. Only then can we walk accordingly. This is classic conservatism: you must first know who you are, where you come from, what your background is, who your forefathers are; then you know what is expected of you and which direction to take. The fact that we are sinners stems from our parents, our grandparents, and ultimately from Adam, in whom all have sinned. That is our origin. At birth we are therefore not a blank slate. That is not true of the old man, nor of the new. We are born of God. We are firstfruits, and everything that opens the womb belongs to the Lord. In short, we are consecrated to the service of God and are therefore holy.

And... nobility obliges.

2 Corinthians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

In practice Achaia was reached overland via an isthmus, from Macedonia southwards to the peninsula. That part of Greece is called Achaia. Eventually a canal was dug straight through the isthmus, with an enormous bridge over it. Corinth lies at that bridge, and Achaia is reached via that bridge. Corinth is the capital there.² Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

This greeting is the same in nearly all the epistles. The Greeks greeted one another with charis, grace. They wished one another favour. The Jews wished one another peace: shalom. They had to, for it was not there. They cried, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. If it ever comes, sudden destruction will come upon them. In other words, nothing will come of it.

If you look up these words—grace and peace—in the Bible, you will find that both are characteristics of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is sometimes simply called grace. In Romans 6 it says we are not under the law but under grace. Clearly, law stands for the Old Covenant of law, and grace for the New Covenant of grace.

The same applies to peace. Spiritual unity through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3): that is the covenant of peace = the New Covenant. In the Old Testament the New Covenant is already called “My covenant of peace” (Ezekiel 37:26).

This implies that the Old Covenant is by definition war. Life under the law is always war. The New Covenant, however, is grace and therefore peace. The Lord Jesus as Messiah is also called the Prince of Peace. Melchizedek is the King of peace and yet the High Priest of the new covenant.

The sceptre shall not depart from him until Shiloh come (Genesis 49:10). Shiloh is a shortened form of shalom. The sceptre shall not depart until peace comes, the Prince of Peace.

Paul therefore greets the believers in Corinth in a fairly familiar way, yet in reality he wishes them the blessings of the New Covenant of grace and peace.

Grace and peace—not from man, nor as the result of a human peace process, but from God. It can therefore only concern one thing: this New Covenant and all that belongs to it.

Our Father can mean: the One who begat us. That is certainly not unbiblical. Yet the primary meaning of “father” is not begetter—at least not in the Bible.

The Father is the Giver, the Source. He is therefore also the One who bequeaths the inheritance, the Testator. Tubal-cain was the father of all smiths, and Jubal the father of all organ-builders. He did not beget those organ-builders, but taught people the craft or art of building organs. He was the inventor and passed his knowledge on to others.

That is the true meaning of “father.” That is why God is called Father, and we speak of the universal Fatherhood of God—obviously only with respect to the old creation. He is the Creator and therefore the Father of creation.

Satan invented the lie; he is therefore the father of lies.

God is our Father because He gives us these blessings. They come from Him.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Since we are in Christ and share in Him and in all His attributes, God is our Father. That He begat us is true, but that is not the point here. The point is that He has blessed us. Son is the opposite of father. The father is the testator and the son the heir. That is the primary meaning of these words in the Bible, not the most common one. These terms are also used in their lower sense, and the lower the level, the more frequent it becomes.

And the Lord Jesus Christ. That is to say, everything that comes from God comes to us through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other route. Outside Him there is nothing. If you put it in John’s terms, it is roughly this: God, by definition, speaks, for in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This simply means that God speaks. Everything He did, does, and will do, He does through His Word. God speaks and it is. John says that this Word of God is actually the Lord Jesus Christ. When God speaks, He expresses Himself. Then He comes forth with power. When God expresses Himself, the person of our Lord Jesus Christ appears. He is the express image of God’s person. Insofar as God is Light, the Lord Jesus Christ is the brightness of His glory.

In practice, therefore, it makes no difference whether we receive something from God or from the Lord Jesus Christ. For all that God gives, He gives in or through the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Acts 2 it says that God promised to pour out His Spirit on all flesh. He poured out that Spirit on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thereby He rose from the dead. God gives that same Holy Spirit to everyone who believes, through the Lord Jesus Christ. God poured out the Spirit on Him, and He gives that Spirit to everyone who believes. God comes to us through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and conversely, we come to God through the Lord Jesus Christ: “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me,” said the Son.

Paul’s Thanksgiving for Comfort in Affliction

2 Corinthians 1:3

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;

Blessed = praised.

The Lord Jesus Christ does not have, alongside a God, also a Father. It is of course one and the same. He is God and Father.

Our Lord. If it were Hebrew, it would probably say Adonai, the One we serve, who is above us.

That does not prevent "Lord" from also being able to mean Jehovah.

Nevertheless, "our Lord" means that He is our Master. He is the One we serve and in whom we are therefore sanctified.

The Father of mercies = the Giver, the Source of mercies.

Those mercies come from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mercy = grace.

He is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us (Ephesians 2:4). Praise is due to Him because we have received mercy from Him in Christ.

The God of all comfort = Father of all comfort.

Father and God are synonymous terms; mercies and comfort are too. We have received mercy and therefore comfort.

"Comfort" is a keyword here. The word appears very frequently, both as a noun and as a verb. In this section it already occurs ten times. Paul uses the word as often as possible. The Comforter is the One who brings comfort. Alongside grace and peace, it is one of the characteristics of the New Covenant.

The translators had a problem with this word, because we do not really have a good equivalent in English. Even the Greeks had trouble with it. That is why it is difficult to explain what the Greek word for comfort means. It goes back to the original Hebrew word in the Old Testament. That was already a difficult word, because it is translated in two different directions.

Nacham, Nahum, nachem = comfort.

Noah would bring comfort (nacham) (Genesis 5:29). A few verses later it says it repented the Lord that He had made man. That "repented" is the same word as for "comfort." That is a problem, for how do you translate such a word? That is how the Greek word parakaleo came about.

Para = beside, near;

Kaleo = to call.

Parakaleo = to call alongside.

What is called alongside? Someone who can comfort.

A whole doctrine has been made of this. If you ask who the Comforter is, most immediately say "the Holy Spirit," but that is not entirely correct. The Comforter is the Messiah. He said to His disciples: "I go away and will give you another Comforter" (John 14:16). Because we do not know who the Comforter is, we have made the other Comforter into the Comforter. In practice it makes no difference, but doctrinally it can cause problems.

Someone is called alongside. He is therefore called the Comforter, the Paraclete. That is then the Holy Spirit.

It gets even stranger when you translate from Greek to Latin. In the Vulgate Parakletos is translated as ad = beside. Then it becomes an advocate, for vocat = to call.

Advocate = called alongside.

We are supposed to have an Advocate who pleads our cause, who speaks on our behalf and prays to God for us. That is all correct, yet through translation we have lost the concept.

Nacham = to change attitude; to change position or standpoint.

You begin to look at things differently. You change your position towards something or someone. It is not specified whether that is favourable or not. In the Old Testament, when translators think it is favourable, they translate it as “comfort”; when they think it is unfavourable, they translate it as “repent.”

”It is hard to say that it comforted the Lord that He had made man, for the context shows He did not view it positively at all, or find it pleasant that He had made man. It repented Him. It grieved Him. He then gave man 120 years, after which the flood would come. Then He sends a “repenter.” Oh no, now it must be a comforter again—Noah. It is difficult. Therefore you must know the meaning of the word: a change of position or attitude. If negative, it is “repent”; if positive, it is “comfort.”

It concerns a new relationship between God and man, or a different position of God towards us. By nature we are sinners, but where we have come to faith and been born again, we have been brought into a favourable relationship with God. He says: “No one shall pluck them out of My hand.” Moreover, He promises to do a work in us.

Comfort speaks of a change that is to be brought about. That change would be brought about by the Nacham, by the Comforter. But that is the designation of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Comforter. Since He is not physically present among us in this world, He has sent another Comforter who would not only be with us but even in us. He would indeed plead our cause. He also places us in a certain legal position with God. The comparison with an advocate therefore holds reasonably well, but it is not fully adequate.

Paul therefore says that we stand in a different relationship to God—not that of the natural man, the sinner, but that of the regenerate man, a child of God and thus a servant of God. We should therefore not measure our position as believers by human standards or norms, but by God’s standards and norms. Then it suddenly looks very different.

Just as the first epistle to the Corinthians is characterised by the concept of edification, building up a temple or body, so comfort is characteristic of the second epistle to the Corinthians.

We shall look up the texts in Genesis where nacham occurs. Going through the whole Old Testament would take far too much time. We shall therefore limit ourselves to Genesis.

Genesis 5:28

And Lamech lived an hundred eighty and two years, and begat a son:

29 And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed.

This is the first occurrence of nacham in the Bible. One might say of nacham that in practice something is replaced. Something better takes the place of what was there before. That is a more concrete way of putting it than merely a change of attitude.

Something better comes in place of something that has passed away.

Genesis 6:6

And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.

7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. It repented the Lord. That is a change of attitude.

8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

The text could have said “and,” but in the original there is actually no word at all: Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.

The idea is that something better comes than what existed at that moment. The idea is that that ungodly humanity was wiped out, except for Noah and his eight. Of course, it is highly symbolic. It did happen historically, but it has a symbolic function. It is an illustration of how a new creation, a new world, comes into being after judgement has been passed on the old. It is therefore a picture of what would happen later. Peter also says something about it, quite apart from the fact that it is also a depiction of something that had happened earlier: the condemnation of an old world, after which on the third day the earth rose up out of the waters. In any case, the idea is total change.

In Genesis 23 Sarah dies, the mother of Isaac. Suddenly a tent in the camp stood empty. Isaac’s mother disappears, but in chapter 24 another woman is arranged, a wife. It is an extended story, because of course it also has prophetic significance, which is not relevant here.

Eliezer, Abraham’s servant, is sent out to find a wife for Isaac in the land of Abraham’s kindred. No sooner said than done. He returned with a lady, Rebekah.

Genesis 24:67

And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Previously Sarah lived in that tent. She had died, and now Rebekah comes into that tent. The mother had passed away, but he received something in her place. Something better, is the thought. He was comforted thereby. That is a different position, a different relation, a different relationship. You could also say that the old (with apologies to Sarah) was replaced by the new.

Prophetically, it means that the Old Covenant has ended and the New has dawned.

In Genesis 27 Jacob has just wrested the birthright blessing from his father Isaac, which he had bought from his brother Esau for a mess of pottage. After that blessing, Rebekah warns Jacob.

Genesis 27:42

And these words of Esau her elder son were told to Rebekah: and she sent and called Jacob her younger son, and said unto him, Behold, thy brother Esau, as touching thee, doth comfort himself, purposing to kill thee.

Esau intends to change the situation by killing his brother. That is negative, and yet it is translated as “comfort.” This too is prophetic and has to do with the dawning of the New Covenant, but that is a separate matter. For that you need to know what Esau stands for, what Jacob stands for, and where it will lead.

Jacob is a picture of the church, and Esau of Judaism. When the New Covenant dawned and Jacob received the birthright, that brought the church the enmity of Judaism. The result is that Jacob must flee. He has to flee to uncle Laban for about 20 (2000) years.

Then he returns, and Jacob and Esau become “friends” again. That is at the second coming of Christ.

Comfort, therefore, as an indication of the change in the situation.

In Genesis 37 Jacob is told that Joseph has died tragically. That was not so, but that is what he was told.

Genesis 37:35

And all his sons, and all his daughters, rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, For I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus his father wept for him.

Joseph was gone, and nothing came in his place. In reality something did come in his place, for Joseph, the rejected one, became king in a foreign land. That parallels Jacob with Laban. Here too it concerns the birthright. A dramatic turning point in history, but it always has to do with the issue of the birthright, all pointing to the dawning of the New Covenant and the birthright of the church. The one comes in place of the other.

In Genesis 38 it is again about the birthright and thus again about the situation of the dawning of the New Covenant. Only now the line runs through Judah. The story of Joseph, which begins in chapter 37, is interrupted here. In Genesis 39 the story of Joseph simply continues.

Joseph is officially the bearer of the birthright. For the occasion he has a kingdom in Egypt, although among the tribes of Israel it would not be the tribe of Joseph that received the kingship, but the tribe of Judah. Here we immediately get a picture of that. What about his succession? Who becomes the heir of the promise of a throne?

Er, the son of Judah, was married, but he died and had no children. Then the widow, Tamar, should have married the next son of Judah, Shelah, but this heir of Judah also died prematurely. Then there was still Onan, but he practised onanism, so he too provided no offspring. Then Tamar thought she had to take matters into her own hands. It came down to Tamar becoming pregnant by Judah, without him knowing who she was, for they were not that intimate. From that a twin was born, of whom we still do not know who was the firstborn. Nevertheless, it concerns the kingship within Israel. A beautiful story.

Genesis 38:12

And in process of time the daughter of Shuah Judah's wife died; and Judah was comforted, and went up unto his sheepshearers to Timnath, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite.

13 And it was told Tamar, saying, Behold thy father in law goeth up to Timnath to shear his sheep.

The word “comforted” is the introduction to everything that follows. Not merely that he went to celebrate a sheep-shearing party to comfort himself over the fact that his wife had died. It concerns the whole story. He comforted himself and he went up... then a whole story follows. Something else comes in its place, and here it is related how that happened. In the second instance he still begets offspring, under the motto “many first shall be last and many last first,” or under the motto “God takes away the first to establish the second.” In short, Tamar becomes pregnant and bears a twin: Perez and Zerah, or vice versa. The one named firstborn is not so in practice, or is he? And if he was not, why is he still called that?

This story too expresses how ultimately the New Covenant comes into being, how a king comes forth from Judah. The Lord descends from Judah and Tamar and then from Perez.

In Genesis 50 Jacob has died, while Joseph is still in charge. Not in prison, but in Egypt. Now that Jacob is dead, Joseph's brothers think they are now at his mercy. They think Joseph will now probably feel free to do away with his brothers. So they submit to him and say: "Behold, we are thy servants!" They were terrified.

Genesis 50:19

And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for am I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.

21 Now therefore fear ye not: I will nourish you, and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them.

A few years earlier, when Joseph made himself known to his brothers, he said much the same thing: to preserve them a posterity in the earth and to save their lives by a great deliverance (Genesis 45:7). It was arranged by God that way. Joseph could not help it himself either.

Joseph comforted them. He is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. From Joseph of Nazareth came, at least legally, the Comforter. Here we find Joseph again as comforter. In any case, he is a type of Christ.

These were all the texts in Genesis in which the word nacham occurs.

Through David's adultery with Bathsheba she became pregnant. David wastes no time and ensures that Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, is placed in the front line of battle. Plan successful, Uriah killed. Bathsheba mourns for a time over her fallen husband, but soon moves in with David. She bears a child, but that child is not destined for a long life, for it dies. Then David comforted Bathsheba, with the result that another son was born, Solomon, clearly in place of the one who had died.

2 Samuel 12:24

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

The first was the nameless son. He disappeared from the scene. Then Solomon appeared. He is a picture of Christ in His glory, in His second coming. Solomon did indeed inherit the throne of David, despite those rather peculiar family circumstances. Nacham is therefore translated into Greek as parakaleo. That word is then also used in the Bible in Greek for nacham. That applies to all new words in the New Testament. They do not have the normal Greek meaning. They have the meaning of the Hebrew word that in the Septuagint was translated into Greek.

Luke 2:25

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

That is the Simeon quoted by James in Acts 15 through the Comforter.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,

28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:

30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,

31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;

32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

What had his eyes seen? The Consolation, or the Lord's Christ, or thy salvation. The thing is named, but of course it is the Saviour.

33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.

Why? Did they not know the Scriptures? Did they not know this? Why did they marvel? They did not marvel at what he said, but at the order in which he said it. A light to lighten the Gentiles. That salvation is prepared before the face of all people. Only in the last instance does it say: and the glory of thy people Israel.

The normal order would be: first Israel, and in Israel all the nations of the earth would be blessed. That order is here reversed, just as in Isaiah 42 and 49. That is quite astonishing, because it is not the normal course of events.

Isaiah 42:6

I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

Isaiah 49:6 And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.

Comfort therefore relates to the Comforter, namely to Christ Himself and thus to the dawning of the New Covenant. After that it refers to the whole content of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is comfort, for it is a change of attitude and comes in place of the Old Covenant, which was ended through the death of the Lord Jesus. The Old Covenant is unto Christ, who fulfilled that Old Covenant of law. The end of the law is Christ. After that, through the resurrection of Christ, the New Covenant officially comes into effect. God takes away the first to establish the second. That is why comfort is characteristic of the New Covenant. The Comforter is the High Priest and King and therefore also the Mediator of the New Covenant. In Christian circles this is difficult to explain, because the term Comforter has been reserved exclusively for the Holy Spirit. In Jewish circles, however, Nacham is a well-known Messianic title.

The whole second epistle to the Corinthians speaks of the work of Christ. We are not delivered over to the world and worldly principles. Whether they are good or bad has nothing to do with it. We are delivered over to Christ, who is the Head of the church and who is the Mediator, not of the Old Covenant of law and letter, but of the New Covenant of the Spirit and thus of life. The Corinthians did belong to the New Covenant, but they lived according to the principles of the Old Covenant. They lived after the flesh and according to the principles of this old world. They were not or hardly aware of the privileged position they occupied as believers.

That position is not according to the first principles of this world, but according to the Covenant characterised by grace, mercy, peace, hope, and freedom.

It remains a difficult matter to bring these things to the fore. Paul speaks of them several times and says they are things hard to be understood, not because they are difficult, but because people have become dull of hearing. They would rather not hear it and try with all sorts of arguments to contradict those things, or simply to ignore them. That is probably why the long introduction in this epistle, which really only gets going at the end of chapter 2, or perhaps even in chapter 3. Everything that precedes is a run-up that the apostle takes.

In 1 Corinthians 2 Paul uses the same terms about milk and solid food as in the last part of Hebrews 5. They were still babies and not mature enough. They only wanted pap and no solid food. The difference between the two epistles is that in the epistle to the Corinthians Paul lingers a bit in it. He tries to adapt to the level of the Corinthians. Fortunately he still escapes it and suddenly jumps out. In the second epistle to the Corinthians he does that in chapters 3, 4, and 5.

2 Corinthians 1:4

Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.

The God of all comfort comforts us in all our tribulation. He does so in order that we in turn may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble. We would do that with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted of God. The verse begins with God comforting us and ends the same way.

The background to this, which we shall also see in the rest of the epistle, is that the Corinthians take it amiss that Paul undergoes tribulations. They think that you do not have to take seriously someone who has so much adversity in his life. If he had been a servant of God, things would have gone more prosperously for him. But things go rather against him. In the continuation of this chapter you come across something as banal as that Paul would come to visit the Corinthians, but he had still not done so. So you could not rely on him either. Not that they would have been glad if he had come, on the contrary, but they did hold it against him. The epistle goes on about that for chapters, especially the last chapters of this letter.

Paul explains in the following verses what he said in verse 4. It does not get simpler.⁵ For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. The sufferings are the tribulation from the previous verses. The Corinthians take Paul's tribulations amiss, but he says that that tribulation precisely results in him being comforted by Christ. The more tribulation, the more comfort. He does suffer abundantly, but he is also comforted abundantly. That is the other side of the story.

2 Corinthians 1:6

And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

Where Paul himself is comforted, he is also qualified to comfort the Corinthians. The Lord Jesus learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Since then he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. He was in all points tempted like as we are, that he might succour them that are tempted. What happened to the Lord Himself formed Him into a High Priest who can properly have compassion on our infirmities. The difficulty of this thought is that many are not aware that the Lord Jesus also had to learn something. The same applies to Paul and to us. He is afflicted, but also comforted and can therefore comfort others. He has been encouraged and can therefore encourage others. It must again be noted that comfort has to do with everything that belongs to the New Covenant.

The fact that Paul is afflicted is for the consolation and salvation of the Corinthians. It has eternal consequences. Paul already anticipates 4:17 here.

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

Our light affliction now works for us much glory in the future, when we shall receive much glory, is the intention. That is salvation. That is what he says in 1:6 as well.

James says:

James 1:2

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;

3 Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.

4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

Of course, before the judgement seat of Christ. That leads to salvation. That salvation has to do with the blessings one receives from God. Those blessings are eternal and therefore lasting. 2 Corinthians 1:6 And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation; Your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we (Paul and Timothy) also suffer. We all get into that. That trial, that temptation, works patience.

Patience = devotion, surrender.

A bit too sweeping, but necessity teaches prayer. Precisely in that tribulation, trial, or temptation we are inclined to take refuge in the Lord. That is precisely what it is about: that we set our trust on the Lord, that we live by faith = trust.

Whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation;

This is again a parallel to the beginning of the verse.

Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation;

Whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.

That affliction and comfort obviously belong together. Where we are afflicted in the world, there comfort is necessary and change of position or attitude (change of attitude). We should not orient ourselves to the world, but to the Lord. Within the framework of the epistle to the Hebrews, we should not trust in the law, but in the New Covenant. We should not turn to the dominion of the law, but to the throne (dominion) of grace. That is what comfort is. The new in place of the old.

2 Corinthians 1:7 - 8

And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation.

Whether the Corinthians actually knew this is another question. Apparently Paul assumes they did, since he had preached it to them. They could therefore know it.

Whether it was a living reality for them in practice is, of course, quite another matter.

Our hope of you = our expectation concerning you.

That expectation is steadfast.

Knowing = what the Corinthians know.

Wherever there is patience, there comfort is also received.

People tend to understand suffering as meaning that everything goes against them and causes pain—that it is all misery. That is why many hope the Lord will come quickly.

That is no higher interest than a personal one. It is understandable, but of course that is not what it is about.

In reality, suffering is bound up with patience. It is a suffering that arises from the measure in which one is devoted to the good cause.

Patience = passion. Not in the sense the word acquires in the Easter season, but in the sense that one allows oneself to be led. Someone who leads with a short “ei” shows the way, and someone who suffers with a long “ij” does nothing other than follow that way. That sometimes hurts. He does not set the pace himself. Cyclists and runners know how that feels. If you can ride or run at your own pace, you can keep it up for a long time. If it goes a little too fast, you ease off a bit and can then keep going again for a long time. But if you are following behind someone else who sets the pace, you have to keep up with him. That is truly exhausting. What you need then is patience. You have to go along. You go beyond your limits, and that hurts. Though it may hurt, patience is not necessarily a negative concept. You suffer for the sake of a good cause. You allow yourself to be led.

Passion is Latin for the same concept. We know the word in two completely different senses. One sense we encounter, for example, in the St Matthew Passion. That is about suffering. Then you think of the cross, of Gethsemane, and so on—only of how much it hurts.

The other sense we encounter, for example, in love. Then it speaks of surrender.

Something comes over you, and you let it happen. Whether it hurts or not has little to do with it. That is what patience is, and suffering too, in this connection of terms.

As ye are partakers of the sufferings...Peter and John stood before the Sanhedrin and were told they must no longer speak in the name of the Lord Jesus. Peter replied, “We cannot but speak.” He did not say they had a command to do so and must obey God rather than men (though that was said in another context), but they could do nothing other than speak in the name of Jesus. The leading power that was in them and over them was stronger than their own will. There was no choice. They were inwardly compelled. That is suffering and patience with a long “ij”. As ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation that flows from it. Precisely through that you come into different circumstances (change of attitude). That applied to the Lord Jesus Himself as well. He said on one occasion: “But what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this cause came I unto this hour.” That had been the point all along—for decades. You may dread it, but that power is stronger. In a few hours you do not throw away your entire life.

Romans 8:18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

The sufferings of believers, who are joint-heirs with Christ of God. The sufferings of this present time do not outweigh the glory that awaits us.

Compared = to determine the value.

There is a causal connection between the sufferings of this present time and the glory that shall be revealed to us. The more one suffers, the more glory one will receive. That does not mean the more it hurts, but the more one is devoted. If you think it has to do with enduring pain, you end up with self-flagellation. That was—and perhaps still is—rather common in broad Christian circles. That is of course nonsense. It is about devotion. That you allow yourself to be led.

Suffering brings consolation with it, bearing in mind that consolation is not the same as what we ordinarily mean by the word in everyday English. Consolation is the designation for the blessings of the New Covenant, also called salvation. Paul returns to this at length in chapters 3, 4, and especially 5, where it says that we must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ in order finally to receive that glory, that salvation, that reward. That forms part of what is generally called consolation.

Those things are already present in chapter 1:10, namely that He will yet deliver us. That refers to the rapture of the church and our appearing before the judgement seat of Christ. See also verse 14, where the day of the Lord Jesus Christ is spoken of in the sense of the judgement of the Lord Jesus Christ over us, in a positive sense.⁸ For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: Asia = Asia Minor, present-day Turkey.

Pressed = afflicted.

Paul is already beginning here to excuse himself for the fact that he has still not visited the Corinthians. You really ought to read verse 23 first. Then what is said in the preceding section is easier to understand.²³ Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

He offers some arguments as to why he has not yet come to Corinth.

1 Corinthians 16:5

Now I will come unto you, when I shall pass through Macedonia: for I do pass through Macedonia.

6 And it may be that I will abide, yea, and winter with you, that ye may bring me on my journey whithersoever I go.

7 For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry a while with you, if the Lord permit.

If the Lord permit. Remember that especially. To his relief afterwards, the Lord did not permit it. That is the background to the whole second epistle to the Corinthians. He says he was prepared three times to come to them; he prayed to the Lord three times, and the Lord only said, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." That was it, and he did not go to Corinth. The whole epistle shows that he dreaded it like a mountain, but probably the Lord did not permit him to go.

Why should He? He had nothing to seek there, for they did not want to listen to him anyway.

In any case, Paul had undergone affliction in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. There is a reference here to Acts 19:23 ff. Paul was in Ephesus, and things were going against him there. It is questionable whether 2 Corinthians 1:8 refers to that. Firstly, it is rather doubtful whether Ephesus was even in Asia, at least according to the geographical designations then in use. Secondly, it is quite difficult to fit the expressions of 2 Corinthians 1 into what is described in Acts 19. There was indeed persecution and affliction, but what Paul describes here seems more like an illness from which he was healed—a humanly speaking deadly illness. Otherwise these words are hard to place.

If we try to place the epistles of Paul chronologically within the narrative of Acts, we never succeed fully. Some epistles can be clearly placed, others not at all. Moreover, when Paul at the end of his career says he travelled from here to there and from there to there, we must conclude that a large part of it does not appear in the accounts of Acts.

Biblical history is simply not complete, just as no other history book is complete. The likelihood is therefore very great that there is no account at all in Acts of what Paul refers to:

2 Corinthians 1.9

But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead;

Paul had evidently expected to die. He already had the sentence of death in himself. There was a reason for that: that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. That is in itself already consolation, for it is a change of life-attitude.¹⁰ Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us;

He himself was the victim, but God delivered him from it. That also makes him fit to teach consolation to the Corinthians. The benefit of all such affliction is that we should learn to trust in God.

Why does rain always follow sunshine? So that we should not think things will automatically get better in the future. Things always go wrong again. After you have overcome one distress, the next comes along. Why is that? So that we should not trust in the future, but in the Lord (Ecclesiastes). In two sentences that is the answer to the great question people always hope to find answered in all those philosophies we encounter in the book of Job. People study Job to find an answer to the question of suffering. That answer you find in Ecclesiastes. It is so that one should not set one's trust on man, or on the future, or something of the sort. It does not get better—only worse. Our hope is in the Lord. Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. Paul has been delivered by God. He still delivers, and will yet deliver us in the future. What does he say here? He has after all died and most probably did not escape a martyr's death. Paul reasons from earthly circumstances, but suddenly switches to a much higher level. We do the same regularly. Reasoning from earthly circumstances and then suddenly speaking of much higher things, expecting that those who hear will understand—and sometimes expecting that no one will understand, but that does not matter either. That is built into the relativisation. When we say, "How long before the Lord comes? There are two days," we understand what it means, but many do not.

2 Corinthians 1:10

God who raiseth the dead.

Paul rises for the first time from that low level. Already in verse 9 he begins: With that he already moves to a higher level, for as far as Paul himself was concerned, he had at most escaped death, but he says that God raiseth the dead. With that you are immediately in Romans 4, where the faith of Abraham is set forth as an example, and where more or less the question is asked what Abraham believed. In Genesis 15 God said Abraham would have a son who would be his heir. Abraham believed that, and it was counted to him for righteousness. In Romans 4 Paul quotes that. What did Abraham believe? He believed in a God who calleth those things which be not as though they were. He believed in a God who raiseth the dead. Humanly speaking Abraham could no longer have children, any more than Sarah, because the mother in her was already dead. Abraham too was as good as dead, meaning he could no longer beget; Sarah likewise. Nevertheless, Abraham believed God. That is simply believing that God brings forth life from death. Abraham therefore believed in resurrection from the dead. That

was in fact the birth of Isaac. After that you no longer have such difficulty with a virgin birth. If you do not believe God can raise the dead, then you do not believe in God. If you still want to continue the discussion, then it becomes about different definitions of the concept “God.” Then you end up not with God, but with images of God, of which it is said that you should make no image of God.

God reveals Himself to us in an Image. That God calleth those things which be not as though they were. If He can make this creation, why should He not be able to call back something that has disappeared from this creation, and on another level?

Paul says it is about the God who raiseth the dead. With that he already distances himself from the healing of some deadly illness and comes to another level, for raising the dead has everything to do with the New Covenant and thus with consolation, but also with a new creation that God had promised to make. On that level he speaks. He says that this historically takes place in three phases. God has delivered us from so great a death—in the past. He doth deliver—in the present. We hope, in the sense of expect, that He will yet deliver us—in the future. Deliverance therefore in the past, in the present, and in the future. That does not mean we would not die from some illness or old age. It concerns much higher things: the threefoldness of what God does, namely deliverance, sanctification, and salvation. Those things exist in threefold form, on the level of spirit, soul, and body. We have come to faith and have been born again. God has regenerated us; He has delivered us through the resurrection of Christ. That happened in the past. In the present He delivers us with regard to our walk, our conduct, our practical life. That is called soul, and thus deliverance of the soul and salvation of the soul (Hebrews 10). After that we still have the coming deliverance: the deliverance of our body. Spirit, soul, and body therefore. What God now does in us has to do with the salvation of the soul.

Here they are systematically named in one breath. God has delivered us, He delivers us, and will deliver us.

Regeneration is birth out of the Spirit. We have been born again according to the spirit. We are therefore saved according to the spirit. According to the body that will happen in the future, at the deliverance of our body. In between we live in the present, and the Lord now delivers us and changes us into His image, according to the inward man. The following chapters are actually about that.

We find this threefoldness also in 1 Thessalonians 5:23

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here He is not called the God of consolation, but the God of peace, likewise as a designation of the God of the New Covenant.

Instead of deliver, it now says sanctify.

And your whole... And = namely.

What is here called spirit and soul and body is not an anthropological consideration, but means that man will be wholly and entirely sanctified, or delivered. According to the spirit we have been delivered, according to the soul we are being delivered, and according to the body we shall be delivered. The wish here is that what began with the spirit will also work out in the soul, in the believer's walk of life. That is sanctification. That will issue in the salvation of our body.

Hence in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5 there is mention of the rapture of the church. The same applies, incidentally, to the second epistle to the Corinthians.¹¹ Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.

Insofar as we co-work with the apostle, there is deliverance, salvation, sanctification according to the soul—that is, in the present time.

Co-working refers in the first place to involvement in the labour of the apostle Paul. The simplest form of co-working is providing the financial means. It would have been most natural for the Corinthians also to contribute to Paul's work. The subtle dig in this verse is that the Corinthians never did contribute to it. That is mentioned on several occasions in this epistle. Paul does not reproach them for it. Nevertheless, it would have been natural if they had done so. Paul certainly provided for his own livelihood in Corinth itself. He was a tentmaker and practised that trade there together with Aquila.

Paul speaks of the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons. The Corinthians themselves were not among them. Paul does suggest that he is thankful for the fact that others did contribute to this ministry of his.

It is about thanksgiving. Believers should learn that too. Be thankful, giving thanks in everything. We as believers are supposed to have completely forfeited our earthly rights. Everything we receive, we receive from God, solely by grace. Therefore gratitude befits us, which also comes to expression in verbal thanksgiving. Our prayer too should always be accompanied by thanksgiving. That alone is the outworking of sanctification and consolation. For it flows from a changed attitude (change of attitude).

2 Corinthians 1:12

For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.

In simplicity and sincerity towards God.

Simplicity = without ulterior motives. There is no double agenda. You have no hidden intentions. You are sincere. That word therefore follows.

Paul had no other intentions. He regards that as an honour. Instead of honour it says rejoicing. He conducted himself in the world in simplicity and sincerity, and that certainly applied to the time he was with the Corinthians.

Not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God. That was his relationship to the Corinthians, without further ulterior motives. In both epistles it is dealt with that others who preached the Word of God did have those ulterior motives and were also out to lord it over the Corinthians. Later Paul also reproaches the Corinthians for that. They apparently found it pleasant to be dominated.

2 Corinthians 2:17

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

It comes down to this: for many the Word of God had become a kind of trade, to profit themselves in some way. Paul says he does precisely the opposite. In chapter 4 he returns to it. 2 Corinthians 4:2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

There are those who peddle the Word of God. At the very least they do the Word of God an injustice. They put a covering over it (the hidden things of dishonesty), because they do not want to preach certain biblical truth, since it does not fit their double agenda. They have ulterior motives and therefore think it better to withhold certain biblical truths.

Especially if you preach that all things are lawful, you get problems with that, for then people behave licentiously, and how do you restore order in the camp? Such things are therefore better not preached, people say. But Paul says precisely that the covering must come off, for we stand in liberty. Insofar as we would not behave licentiously with that knowledge, that must come through the renewing of our mind, through the change of the inward man. That is the deliverance in this present time, the salvation of the soul.

2 Corinthians 1:13

For we write none other things unto you, than what ye read or acknowledge; and I trust ye shall acknowledge even to the end;

We are now writing nothing that you do not already know and have also accepted.

Nevertheless Paul hopes that they will acknowledge those things even to the end. End does not refer to time, but to fully acknowledging and making their own what they know and have acknowledged.

To the end means in practice to the fulfilment, to the completion; fully. End in the sense of purpose and therefore fulfilment. That ye may acknowledge them fully and not merely in part. We have been delivered, and if you know that deliverance, then you should also fully accept that deliverance. It then concerns not only our spirit, but also our soul; not only our standing, but also our state, our circumstances. That was precisely what was lacking in the Corinthians. They were willing to acknowledge that they were children of God, but to live from that went a bit too far for them. They clung to carnal things and carnal circumstances.

2 Corinthians 1:14

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

In part is the opposite of to the end from the previous verse. They had acknowledged it in part, but the intention was precisely that they should acknowledge it fully, to the end. The salvation, or the things written to the Corinthians that are known and acknowledged by them (v. 13), have to do with what in verse 14 is called the day of the Lord Jesus. That is the designation of our manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ (see 5:10). Our practical life should bear fruit, should produce fruit for eternity. Though this life is passing, the good works that flow from it are not passing. They work a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (4:17). The partial has to do with our regeneration; the completion of it has to do with the fruit of our life, with the measure in which we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord to serve Him—preferably with all patience and without any reserve.

In this verse it says that Paul is the rejoicing of the Corinthians, and the Corinthians are the rejoicing of Paul. So if you ask what became of those Corinthians, they supported Paul and contributed to his labour. Conversely, the believers in Corinth are the result of Paul's ministry. All, of course, up to a certain level, but still. In both cases you can of course say it is the Lord's work, but one of the aspects of the New Covenant is that we

have been made able to be ministers of the New Covenant. In that way we are involved in God's work under that New Covenant. For that we should also receive reward in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The day of the Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a day on the calendar, but is used in the sense of judgement. Things are brought to light and right is spoken about them. Think of days and summonses.

The day of the Lord Jesus Christ is the judgement by the Lord Jesus Christ. We must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ. Manifestation means it has come to light, it has been placed in the light. The Lord Himself shines His light upon it and makes a pronouncement about it.

The day of Christ is not the same as the day of the Lord. That term is taken from countless statements in the Old Testament. That is the designation of the second coming of Christ, in which the Lord Himself (Jehovah) will judge the nations, humanity. In which He will judge everything on this earth. The day of the Lord is therefore not Sunday. Sabbath could theoretically still be, since the Sabbath has something to do with the second coming of Christ, but that is highly academic. You can argue it, but it is of no further use.

The day of the Lord Jesus Christ we find in:

1 Corinthians 1:8 Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it...

1 Corinthians 4:3-4 ...

But he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come...In 1 Corinthians 4:3 there is mention of a man's day. Literally it says "day of man." That is neatly translated as "man's judgement." Paul says there that he is not interested in a man's day, in a judgement upon him by men. He is interested only in a judgement from the Lord Himself. Him he serves, and not men. In that connection we also know the expression "your day," your judgement (Acts 13:41 = in your days, from Habakkuk 1:5).

John 8:56

Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.

Here it concerns "my day": my judgement. He would be judged by men, but looks forward to the time when it will be the other way round

1 Corinthians 5:5

To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:14

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Philippians 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

Philippians 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

2 Thessalonians 2:2

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

That is a misunderstanding, for here it ought to have read “day of the Lord.” That is also evident from the context, since it refers to Old Testament passages of Scripture. Other translations therefore have it that way, such as NIV.

2 Peter 3:12

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

Evidently Peter does not use this expression merely to describe the second coming of Christ, but what we call the Last Day. He speaks here of the passing away of the whole old creation, when the heavens and the earth shall burn and melt as the final judgement of God upon His own old creation. Day of God here is therefore also the judgement of God. This expression occurs only here. It is the sequel to the second coming of Christ, which is described earlier in the same chapter: the coming of the Son of man = the day of the Lord.

Day of God refers to God as Creator;

Day of the Lord refers to Jehovah, who in some way maintains a relationship with the creation.

We also know “the day of wrath of our God” (Romans 2:5). These are somewhat freer terms, and the meaning depends on where they are used.

“The day of his wrath” (Revelation 6:17) is a synonym for the day of the Lord.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

Evidently not used here in the sense of judgement. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Here day has the sense of “light”: glory. God reveals Himself under this New Covenant.

This is taken from Isaiah 49:8...

“In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee.”

Paul says that this is now. Thus the statements from Isaiah 49 apply to this present time. Salvation would go to the ends of the earth and to the islands of the sea, namely to Britain and so on. That is therefore in our days. If you carefully do what Peter says—comparing Scripture with Scripture—then no problem need arise over this.

Ephesians 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

From the context it is clear that this refers more specifically to the redemption of our body.

“Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”

The working of the Spirit in us is the earnest of the redemption. It leads us to the glorification of our body, accompanied by the rapture of the church and our appearing before the judgement seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 1.14

As also ye have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoicing, even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.

As children of God you can indeed continue to live according to the principles of this world, but you will one day regret it, for we must all be made manifest before the judgement seat of Christ. That is the point of serving the Lord here in our life. We shall in the future receive reward for it. There is therefore nothing wrong with wanting to serve the Lord for that reason. That is what it is all for. Does it make sense in this world? Perhaps not. That does not matter either; what matters is what the Lord thinks of it and whether it contributes to His glory. If it does, then it also contributes to our glory. The point is that we allow ourselves to be involved in God's work, as a demonstration of His grace.

Paul's Travel Plans to Corinth

2 Corinthians 1:15

And in this confidence I was minded to come unto you before, that ye might have a second benefit;

16 And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

In this confidence—that he is their rejoicing and they are his—Paul wanted to come to Corinth once more. Paul calls that visit a benefit. The word in Greek also has a somewhat lower meaning. You greet one another with grace. In general the word stands for prosperity. It therefore sounds rather pompous language. Perhaps it is intended that way, but it need not necessarily be understood so. In any case, it comes down to Paul wanting to visit the Corinthians a second time. During his first visit the church there came into being.

2 Corinthians 1:16

And to pass by you into Macedonia, and to come again out of Macedonia unto you, and of you to be brought on my way toward Judaea.

Paul's visit to the Corinthians was the other way round. He sailed from Troas in Turkey across to Philippi and Berea. That is Macedonia. Then he travelled to Athens, after which he eventually went further south on that narrow part to Corinth. Thus he came into Achaia. That is the southern part of what we call Greece. It is a peninsula. You reach it via Macedonia and Corinth, which is also the capital of Achaia. That is how Paul had travelled, and from there he also returned northwards.

What Paul describes here—that he planned to go via Corinth to Macedonia—we cannot find anywhere in the history. He is therefore speaking here of a different travel plan, about which we read nothing at all in the book of Acts. That means we do not know part of Paul's journeys. Probably the greater part, for we encounter more such things in the Bible, where he names places he visited but which we do not find in his recorded journeys. And we have not even mentioned the years after his release from Rome, after Acts 28.

What we do know of his journeys is of course still essential, for what is written about them is characteristic and thus illustrative for our present dispensation. Nevertheless, we do not have a description of the journeys of the apostles. Well, only three journeys of Paul. But apart from Paul there were certainly twelve other apostles and otherwise seventy. If you want to know anything about them, you end up outside the Bible. Yet we know fairly well what all twelve apostles did and where they went to preach the gospel.

Biblical history, however, as far as the acts of the apostles are concerned, first limits itself to Peter, but he does not get further in the record than Jerusalem, Samaria, and Caesarea with Cornelius. Then Paul appears on the scene, and of him three journeys are mentioned. That is all. It must be clear that far more travelling took place, for in those days the gospel was preached throughout the whole world. If you delve into the history of that time, you will be astonished at the distances people covered. It was all by boat, horse, donkey, perhaps a cart, and on foot. That possibility of travel was decisive for the rapid spread of the gospel.

In any case, Paul planned to travel north via Corinth. Moreover, he wanted afterwards to be escorted by the Corinthians to Judaea, to Jerusalem. He did eventually go there and was taken prisoner there. To what extent what is written here formed part of the planning for those events is unclear.

2 Corinthians 1:17

When I therefore was thus minded, did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay?

It therefore went wrong. Evidently none of those plans came to anything. He did not visit Corinth. That did not arise from any levity on Paul's part. Yet the Corinthians reproach him for it.

Must he also stick to plans once he has made them? You can make plans, but that does not mean everything will go as planned. It can turn out differently, or you can change your plans. They accuse him of unfaithfulness. That may all be so, but...

2 Corinthians 1:18

But as God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.

Now he does speak of the word that came to them, but it is no longer about his plan to visit Corinth. Now he speaks of his preaching when he was once in Corinth. There was nothing doubtful about that word, for it was not Paul's word but the Word of God. He is faithful, for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (v. 20). As far as there are promises of Paul and his fellow-workers, you never know whether they can make them good. God, however, is faithful, and the word they preached was not yea and nay: on the one hand yea and on the other nay.

2 Corinthians 1:19

For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea.

Silvanus = Silas.

The word preached by them was not yea and nay, but yea. And not in them, but in Him, for...

2 Corinthians 1:20

For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

For God is by definition the One who speaks, also in our days. Though it must be said that He now does so in a different way than in former times, in the days of ignorance. God of old spoke at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the

prophets. In these last days He has spoken unto us by His Son (Hebrews 1:1). In any case, John says that God is Word, and that means He speaks. That He does not do so audibly through prophets in our days is precisely what He said, for He had said that in that day He would hide His face (Deuteronomy 31:17–18; 32:20). That is our day, but in our day we have the Bible. Had it depended on man, it would long since have been destroyed. Yet that has not happened. God of course sees to that. God speaks and has set His promises down in black and white. These things are written for our admonition, thanks to 1 Corinthians 10:11.

All the promises of God = God has made promises, and not just one, two, or three. The normal sense of the expression is that it becomes difficult to count them. Not necessarily because of the number, but it may also be because they are hard to distinguish from one another. David said it is impossible to declare them in order (Psalm 40:5—in the Hebrew numbering 40:6).

Those many promises are in Him yea, and in Him Amen, Amen = yea. In the KJV it is often translated “verily”: Verily, verily, I say unto you... = Amen, amen, I say unto you... In this case it is an opening word, whereas at other times it is used as a closing word.

Those promises that are in Him are in Him yea and verily, unto the glory of God by us. The work of Christ serves unto the glory of God. That is the purpose of the work of Christ. God has appointed this Son, this Messiah, to be Lord and Christ. These things are therefore not primarily unto the glory of Paul or of us.

That he did not carry out his plans may perhaps not do him credit, but that is not the point, for the point is primarily the promises of God. They are reliable, and that also redounds to the glory of God.

Unto the glory of God by us. Paul and we are after all those who preach the gospel. All the work of God was announced beforehand and is therefore by definition the outworking of that Word of God and also the fulfilment of the promises of God.

2 Corinthians 1:21

Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Stablisheth = made firm, established. Who has also made you firm in Christ. Anointed = established. By anointing you are appointed. We then do not say established, but appointed.

It is said that this concerns the anointing with the Holy Spirit. That is indeed so, but what exactly is anointing? Anointing was applied to kings, priests, and sometimes to prophets. Prophets are sometimes anointed because that act is immediately part of their symbolism. They are then a type of Christ. That prophets are sometimes anointed is not regulated in the Bible. It is, however, for kings and priests. Anointing is therefore for kings and priests. If we are anointed, then we are anointed as kings and priests.

Unless otherwise stated, the king is also priest. Under the Mosaic law those things were separated in Israel, but that is not the norm but the deviation from the norm. The norm is that of Melchizedek. The king bears the religious responsibility. That was actually the case throughout the world. Therefore the king is by definition also priest. Melchizedek was priest of the most high God, but he was certainly also king. The same applied to Jethro, the priest of Midian. Moreover, under the New Covenant we know our High Priest who is also King.

Melech Tsadik = the righteous king.

Melech shalom = the king of peace.

The king of righteousness and the king of peace. We know the Lord Jesus Christ as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek under the New Covenant. Under that same New Covenant we are made kings and priests according to Revelation 1:6. He loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9).

Anointing therefore means appointment as kings and priests. Whether we also become that in practice? Well, God is faithful, for all the promises of God in him are yea and in him Amen. The preparatory work for that is unto the day of the Lord Jesus (v. 14).

Anointing is a symbolic act. Of course, anointing is literal. Oil is literally poured out. But the question is why that is done. Because it smells nice? No, but of course because it is symbolism. The anointing oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. That is generally known.

There are many types in the Bible, many symbols of the Holy Spirit, such as the white dove, water, wine, but anointing oil as well.

The oil is olive oil, produced by oil-rich olive trees. Olive oil is a picture of eternal life.

Among trees the olive tree is the one that lives longest. The olive tree does not die of old age. You have to cut it down. It is claimed that in the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives, there are olive trees that were already there in the days of the Lord Jesus. They are therefore at least 2000 years old.

Anointing with olive oil is therefore a picture that one obtains eternal life. That it is also supposed to spread a pleasant fragrance is incidental.

Being anointed means receiving the Spirit, and where we receive that Spirit and thereby eternal life, this—certainly in our days—means that we are anointed as kings and priests. Moreover, this implies the birthright, unless otherwise stated. And under the law it is stated otherwise. If the law is also ended in practice, then those concepts all come together again under the New Covenant.

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit (pouring out) would, if taken literally, mean that the Spirit exists in liquid form and that you can therefore pour a spirit out of a bottle, so that the story of the genie in the bottle is indeed also symbolism. You must understand that liquids in general must be regarded as symbols for spiritual things. Things, namely, that have no fixed form. Liquids have no fixed form and take the shape of the vessel in which they are contained. So it is also with the Spirit we have received. It does not change our personality, our being. On the outside we remain who we were, but on the inside something does change. Not everything by far, for we still remain who we were, since the liquid takes the shape of the vessel. We are after all earthen vessels.

That he hath anointed us means therefore that He has given us the Spirit and thus eternal life, but He has also thereby made us kings and priests. An anointing as king and priest suggests an anointing for ever, since it stands for eternal things. Hence that beautiful expression about the priests under the Old Testament, namely that they were hindered by death from continuing (Hebrews 7:23). There were indeed many priests under the Old Covenant, but they had the peculiar habit of eventually passing away after a time. That is a good expression in this connection, for the “passing away” is a picture of the law, of the Old Covenant, the burden one bears. One succumbed to it, so

to speak. They died and had to be succeeded. In contrast, we have but one New Testament High Priest. That is so because he became such after the power of an endless life (Hebrews 7:16). He is able to save to the uttermost, because he ever liveth. The Old Testament priests were therefore hindered by death from continuing. With a little feeling for language you also immediately understand that it is implied that it was not the intention that they should die.

Of course the Lord knew in advance that they would die, but the norm and the ideal was that someone should be priest for ever. Unfortunately the priests of the Old Covenant were perishable, yet they remained priests for all the days still left to them in the flesh. That they were hindered by death from continuing means that this was not the intention. In the same chapter it also says that the Old Testament priesthood was not perfect, because it was laid upon the flesh. The Old Covenant was weak and unprofitable (Hebrews 7:18). Therefore a place was sought for a New Covenant with an eternal priesthood. Of the Priest of this New Covenant it is written that he became such after the power of an endless life. He therefore answers to the norm, to the ideal, for he continues for ever. Something similar was said earlier of man. He would be the image of God. But Adam died, for in the day that he ate of that one tree he would surely die. It took him some time, but eventually he too passed away. Later the second Adam did indeed appear, who is the image of God.

That he hath anointed us is God...

2 Corinthians 1:22

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Who hath also sealed us.

Both verse 21 and 22 begin with: Who hath also...This need not mean that they are two different things, but that it is the same thing, now said in different words.

In Hebrews 1 you find the expression: and again, and again, and again. Here too it means that the same thing is said again, but now in different words, with another Old Testament quotation.

Who hath established us, who hath anointed us, and who hath also sealed us.

Sealing is also a symbolic act. Think of the sealing in the fuse box. Then there is a lead seal with certain marks on it. That actually makes no difference at all, for you take a pair of pliers and the thing is off in a moment. It is symbolism. It warns you not to go in there. Whose it is that may not do so is usually written on the seal.

The stone before the tomb with a seal on it. What does that mean? Nothing more than that if the seal was broken they could see someone had been there. Beyond that it meant nothing. It was a warning that one was not authorised to go in.

In the Bible you also find sealing by means of a ring. Then the word "seal" is not used. Someone is given a ring. That means he receives authority, power. Joshua the high priest in the book of Zechariah, for example, received a ring. When the prodigal son returned he also received a ring. He thereby received authority. If you receive that, then you receive the birthright.

Judah on the other hand had a ring (that refers to his kingship), but had to hand it in. The ring came into Tamar's possession and therefore into...?

Did it come to Zerah or Perez? In any case somewhere you would not have expected.

His staff, which he also had to give up, is also a picture of kingship. The sceptre would not depart from Judah. It went to Tamar.

God has sealed us. That is therefore symbolism. The meaning is authentication, that we have been established or anointed on legal grounds.

The Name of the Lord Himself is on it, for in him are all the promises of God yea and amen. That sealing functions as a signature. We have “official” guarantee for these things. The next expression is therefore “earnest.” That makes four in total: established, anointed, sealed, and earnest given. All those expressions stand for making sure, guaranteeing.

Sealing has to do with ownership. A seal is placed on it with a name on it.

Ephesians 1:13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

After we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and believed, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.

It almost seems as if the two expressions from 2 Corinthians 1 are here mixed up, for it says: anointed with the Holy Spirit. Here it says: sealed with the Holy Spirit. From this it is clear that there is no difference. Because we are anointed, we have also been sealed. The Name of Christ is as it were stamped on us, whereby we have guarantee.

We were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The promised Holy Spirit. As it had been promised. That too is fulfilment of Old Testament promises. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28). That is the first reference to the promises from the Old Covenant under the New Covenant (Acts 2:17). It is mentioned earlier, but then in different words: “Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (Isaiah 12:3; John 7:37–38). The Lord Himself as the source of living water, but that is just as much the Holy Spirit. If you replace the Holy Spirit with eternal life, which it is, then you come to quite a few more places, beginning in Genesis. It was promised.

We were sealed with the Holy Spirit who was promised. Which is the earnest. Earnest is a good translation of the Greek word, but what you do not see in English is that the word also means “advance payment.” It is the deposit, an advance. We have received the earnest, but there is more to come. It does not mean that when we receive what was promised us we give the earnest back again, as was suggested with Judah and Tamar. Peter is forthright and says that God has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness. That does not alter the fact that according to him also there shall in the future be richly supplied unto us an entrance into his everlasting kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).

We have received an earnest, and that earnest remains an earnest until the redemption of the purchased possession. After that the earnest is not taken away, but thereafter we receive the rest. It is an earnest in the sense of an advance payment, as a guarantee.

We have received the Spirit, who is the earnest. We were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the earnest of our inheritance, for in the future an inheritance awaits us—at least if you have received that Spirit. We received that Spirit when we came to faith.

An inheritance therefore awaits us; that is why it is also called unto the redemption of the purchased possession. That redemption of the purchased possession is not eternal life. We already have eternal life, and an inheritance awaits us, for we are saved by hope. That hope will be fulfilled at the time of the coming redemption, namely the redemption of our body. When we came to faith we were born again and thereby received new life,

the Holy Spirit. Our hope is that in the future we shall be placed as sons of God. The Spirit gives us guarantee of that—at least if that Spirit can do His work. Then all will be well.

Romans 8:14

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

That Spirit leads us to our sonship (v. 15), mistranslated as adoption.

Romans 8:23

And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

Firstfruits are the first fruits of the harvest. God has begotten us again, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18). We are the firstborn of the Spirit. We which have the firstfruits of the Spirit means that we have the birthright, or alternatively that we are those firstborn. We were the first born of the Spirit and therefore receive the birthright. Of the firstborn in Genesis it is said that they were not firstborn after the flesh, but after the promise (Romans 9:8). Not those born after the flesh, but after the promise.

We have received the Spirit of promise, the promised Holy Spirit. We have been born again and are first under the New Covenant, following the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And therefore we groan and travail within ourselves, for we wait for the sonship. Here it is therefore explicitly stated that sonship is the appointment to the birthright. Because we have or are the firstfruits of the Spirit, we groan within ourselves, because we are on the way to our sonship. What does that mean? Well, the redemption of our body. At the time of and in connection with the rapture of the church we shall be placed as sons. That is why we are saved by hope. According to some, all our hope is already fulfilled the moment we receive eternal life, but that is not correct. That we have received eternal life is the fulfilment of Old Testament promises. That hope has been fulfilled, for God has fulfilled His promises to us (Acts 2:33, 39; 13:32). Nevertheless, He has made better promises to us. To us who are children of God He has promised that we should become sons of God—at least if it depends on Him. That is why in all those epistles we are called to be led by the Spirit, or in other words, we are called to let the Word of God be planted in our hearts in such a way that the word of Christ would dwell in us richly.

Ephesians 4:30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

What you can at least read from it is that it is the Holy Spirit who would bring us to that day of redemption. That day of redemption includes our sonship. That was the intention, and the Spirit leads us there. He does His work in us.

Grieving the Holy Spirit therefore means opposing the work that the Holy Spirit is now doing in us. Can that happen? Yes, it can. You can even quench the Spirit. Quench not the Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19), within yourself.

We are on the way to that sonship. The Spirit gives the guarantee that He will bring us there, but our responsibility is that we should let the Spirit do His work. If there were no responsibility at all on our part, then the whole idea of sonship would be nonsense. The firstborn is expected to be able to bear responsibility. We learn that here, and the first thing we learn about it is that we should let the Spirit do His work. That we should submit ourselves to Him.

In 2 Corinthians 5 the redemption of our body is spoken of, and afterwards our manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

That is in connection with the moment when our earthly house (our body) is dissolved.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

A tabernacle is temporary, and a building is expected to be permanent. Insofar as a tabernacle was a temple, it is a temporary temple. The building that replaces it is the definitive temple.

2 Corinthians 5:2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

2 Corinthians 5:3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

That is the same groaning as in Romans 8:23.

Here three degrees are mentioned: naked, clothed, and clothed upon, as an expression of the glory we should receive.

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

God has given us the Spirit as earnest for that very purpose. That Spirit is the earnest of the coming inheritance, of the coming redemption.

Therefore we always have good courage. That does not alter the fact that in the preceding chapter it is said several times: Therefore we faint not (2 Corinthians 4:1, 16). Back to 2 Corinthians 1.

Both Corinthian epistles are characterised by speaking on a rather low level, but then suddenly Paul leaps up and places it several levels higher, after which he falls back again. That happens here too.

2 Corinthians 1:23

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth.

Paul had not yet come to Corinth, but that was out of longsuffering. You should immediately think here of the longsuffering of the Lord, from 2 Peter 3:9. Why has the Lord not yet come? Because He is longsuffering and would have all come to repentance. Here it is really the same story. Paul hopes that things will more or less resolve themselves. It appears that this has not happened.

To spare you he had not yet come to Corinth. Does he then come with the rod or something? Yes, indeed, and he writes that somewhere (1 Corinthians 4:21).

2 Corinthians 1:24

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

You might perhaps draw that conclusion, as though Paul has dominion over the faith of the Corinthians—especially since in our days it is still thought that there are ecclesiastical authorities who exercise dominion over our faith and at any rate want to

determine what we must and must not believe. In the ecclesiastical institutions this is practised. Paul, however, says that this is not the intention.

There is a reference here to 1 Peter 5:3, where Peter speaks about the functioning and ministry of the elders.

1 Peter 5:1

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Elder = presbyter = not only elder in age, but also elder in rank. From the context it is clear that this is so. Moreover, their position, their function, is also designated by other terms.

Peter was a fellow-elder and therefore not a pope. He was also not a member of the church council. That is sometimes used as a trick. Words from the Bible are given their own meaning and then placed back into the Bible. Thus in the churches an elder has become someone who is a member of the church council. You do not find that in the Bible.

Feed the flock of God which is among you = in which you have a share.

Elders are therefore pastors and not ministers.

Minister = lord. It is said that lord is related to shepherd, but a minister dominates, just like a lord.

Elders are therefore pastors = shepherds.

If an elder has oversight of the flock of God, then he is an episcopos = a bishop. So it is all the same: elder, overseer, shepherd, bishop.

You would not exercise that function because you must, but because you want to. For if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work (1 Timothy 3:1). Then you can, like the brethren of the assembly of believers, claim that there are no offices in the church, but according to biblical standards there are. The next verse, however, says that that function has nothing to do with exercising power or dominion.

You exercise it with a ready mind, with a mind that has been changed under the working of the Spirit, or Christ in us, or the word of Christ in us (see Romans 12:2).

Neither as being lords over God's heritage = there is no question of church princes; no power is exercised, for that is utterly unbiblical.

God's heritage — the addition is not incorrect, but if you really want to add something because you think it is incomplete, then you would have done better to fill in "God's heritage." For it already said: Feed the flock of God.

The flock of God in verse 2 is called in verse 3 the heritage (of God). There is in itself nothing wrong with of the Lord, but it is a bit careless. You should take it from the text itself. The heritage of God; it is His heritage, His possession.

The function of elder is that of example. We also know proponents and leaders, but also examples: being ensamples to the flock. They are different terms for one and the same thing. It certainly does not concern exercising dominion. Power is right, namely law.

There is of course influence, but that is not the exercise of power. Order within the church must be maintained by the working of the Word in the believers. If that does not happen, then so much the worse. The Word must do it. The fact that there is always so much trouble comes from a lack of the ministry of the Word, in which the elders,

overseers, and the like are failing. Of course, everyone fails to some extent, but on the other hand there is generally also deficient listening. People are often itching in the ears and simply do not want to hear certain things. You can hardly blame the shepherds and overseers if they then adapt to that. Moreover, pedagogically speaking, teachers must adapt to the capacities and goodwill of those entrusted to them.

In any case, there is no such thing as ecclesiastical law or ecclesiastical legislation. That is utterly unbiblical.

Peter therefore says that you should not exercise dominion over God's heritage. For that heritage belongs to the Lord Himself, and He is able to do what He deems necessary. If He does not do it, who are we to criticise it? Paul says the same in:

2 Corinthians 1.24

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Paul, Silas, and Timothy are helpers of their joy. One effect of the preaching is joy, among other things. That is what it should produce, for it is after all the glad tidings. For by faith ye stand = standing is standing firm by faith in those many promises of God from verse 20, or the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, of which we just read in Ephesians 1.

2 Corinthians 2:1

But I determined this with myself, that I would not come again to you in heaviness.

Paul had not come, to spare them (1:23). His determination was that although he hoped to visit them, he had also resolved not to come again to them in heaviness, from which you may conclude that he did not come because it would have been in heaviness anyway. It is therefore a subtle dig. A veiled reproach to the Corinthians. Probably so veiled that they did not understand it. Perhaps that was also the intention.

2 Corinthians 2:2

For if I make you sorry, who is he then that maketh me glad, but the same which is made sorry by me?

It was precisely not the intention that Paul should make them sorry, but that they should be made glad. Paul, Silas, and Timothy were after all helpers of their joy. If he must come to rebuke them and make reproaches, then they would hardly be glad about that. That is why Paul did not visit them. Paul would only be glad if those whom he first had to correct had accepted that correction. Evidently that had not happened.

2 Corinthians 2:3

And I wrote this same unto you, lest, when I came, I should have sorrow from them of whom I ought to rejoice; having confidence in you all, that my joy is the joy of you all.

What had he written to them? Probably it concerns his intention to visit them. That is why some think Paul wrote yet another letter between these two epistles. There is still discussion about that to this day. Some think that he may therefore have written yet another letter, so that his total number of letters to the Corinthians would come to four. That automatically raises the question whether those letters are also inspired and

whether they should therefore also have been included in the Bible. Everything is of course completely hypothetical and therefore not interesting at all. Here Paul hopes that if he says he is coming, they may perhaps put things in order, so that he too can rejoice when he comes.

2 Corinthians 2:4

For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote unto you with many tears; not that ye should be grieved, but that ye might know the love which I have more abundantly unto you.

One might regard both of these epistles of Paul as a declaration of love to the Corinthians. We wonder why one should have love for these Corinthians. We do not know that either, but probably it is a picture of the love that Christ has for the church, which yet disappoints Him under many circumstances. It is a love that is not reciprocated.

Restoration of a Penitent

2 Corinthians 2:5

But if any have caused grief, he hath not grieved me, but in part: that I may not overcharge you all.

If anyone has grieved Paul, he has not grieved only him, but in part all. There is a reference here to 1 Corinthians 5:3.

The question is by whom Paul was so grieved among the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians 5 such a figure is mentioned. There is someone who behaves in a certain way, probably making use of Christian liberty under the motto that we are not under the law and therefore may do everything. Paul says there in rather complicated sentences that it is not the intention that we as believers should associate with such people. It is often read as though one does exercise dominion over the heritage of the Lord. It is then read as though you must excommunicate such a person. That incidentally happens quite often in those denominations where no offices in the church are recognised. In other denominations just the same.

It is not, however, excommunication in the sense of barring from the Lord's Supper, but placing outside the fellowship. That is not an ecclesiastical matter, but an individual one. You simply do not associate with such people. Therefore you can still sit in the same hall with such people and celebrate the Lord's Supper together. In orthodox circles people have something to criticise about everyone, but they can still celebrate the Lord's Supper. That is not the point. Whether you can also eat at home with such a person is quite another matter.

You should therefore not associate with such a person until that person changes and draws consequences. Evidently he has done so, and 2 Corinthians 2 is about that.

2 Corinthians 2:6 -8

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many.

7 So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.

8 Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm *your* love toward him

It is a generally biblical thought that we should forgive one another and that we should always be mindful that someone who by his behaviour places himself outside the fellowship can indeed also return.

2 Timothy 2:24

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient,

25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;

26 And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

That does not alter the fact that in these same epistles to Timothy he is indeed told not to associate with that sort of people. He is warned against certain persons named by name: From such turn away. That is a very strong translation in English, but the meaning is that you should turn away from them. Do not associate with them; do not keep company with them. That is dangerous.

In any case, 2 Corinthians 2 assumes that the figure from 1 Corinthians 5 has come to a change of life. Therefore they should forgive him and comfort him. Those things are connected with Paul hoping that the rest of the Corinthians are also a little better on the right path, so that they and Paul can yet go through one door together.⁸ Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him.

In practice, of course.

2 Corinthians 2:9

For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things.

The question is whether the Corinthians take any notice of that first epistle of Paul.

2 Corinthians 2:10

To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ;

11 Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Paul speaks here of the unity of the church. Where ways possibly diverge, there Satan soon gains advantage.

2 Corinthians 2:13

Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord,

13 I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia.

This cannot be well placed in Acts. We therefore do not know when this took place, but that does not matter much. What we do know is that if you want to go to Corinth, you can cross by ship from Troas. It is still about Paul's travel plan, which did not materialise. He was there alone and had much work to do. He could not find Titus and eventually departed to Macedonia, whereas he should have departed to Corinth.

Evidently he was in Troas a second time, but we do not know when.

The Nature of Paul's Preaching

After this rather lengthy introduction, Paul suddenly breaks away from that discussion and, from here through to the end of chapter 5, sets down matters of the utmost importance.

We speak the word of Christ; we speak the word of God in Christ; we do so at all times, wherever we may be, and we do not cover over that word of God. This theme runs right through to chapter 4. Paul may have proved unreliable in keeping his appointments, but that is not the point. The point is that the word of God is preached, that it is preached without any covering, and naturally without any ulterior motives. That word should be preached without falsifying it, without diluting it, and without placing any lid upon it. That is language drawn from the books of Moses and evidently applies in every age. Paul says that we do not take part in such things.

2 Corinthians 2:14

Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Always = at every time; on every occasion. Time as such is so abstract a concept that one can do nothing with it. In every other respect time is always circumstance, occasion. Hence the fixed expression “times and seasons.”

Thanks be to God, who in all circumstances causeth us to triumph in Christ.

Triumph implies that there is war, conflict. If there is no conflict, there is also no triumph, for the preaching of the word of God in Christ is not merely telling something interesting or having a nice little story, but it is war. It is a conflict of light in this dark world—light that would shine in dark hearts and is brought to people who prefer (or preferred) darkness to light, wholly or in part.

Some people do like light, but not too much. The lamps must be dimmed; only then does it become cosy. A little light is necessary, but certainly not too much. The more light there is, the more we see of one another, the more quarrels we have, the harder the shadows become. And so people turn out the light in the world, for they prefer darkness to light. If you nevertheless want it full on, then you get discord, war. But Paul says: Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ. He thanks God that under all circumstances He gives him and his companions the victory. Naturally, the victory of light over darkness.

And maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge = having a share in Christ, together with Christ and thereby having a share in the victory of Christ. We are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

Was there then so much result from the preaching in every place Paul came to? No, but that is not what it is about. The triumph does not consist merely in the preaching having effect, but in our speaking—or proclaiming—the word of God in all boldness and without covering or falsification. That is in itself already a victory. Not that it produces outward results, but victory also consists in the fact that it is spoken. The point is that sacrifice is offered to God. Those sacrifices consist of the fruit of the lips that confess His name (Hebrews 13:15). The victory consists in this: that we, sinful people though we are, have received His word, believe it, and then also speak it. Whether anyone afterwards gives heed to it or not seems actually not to matter. If you have no more than these verses, this is what they say. 15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

How then can there always be triumph if only part of the hearers accept the preaching and another part apparently do not? The triumph lies with the speaker who speaks the word of God. You need not preach that word in a coarse manner, but the preaching of that word is in itself hard and therefore sometimes comes across coarsely, whatever words you use. That word works itself out in those who are saved and in those who perish.

The triumph is that the savour of His knowledge is made manifest. That happens through us, but it says that it is Christ Himself who does it. Thus, insofar as the word of God is preached, it is God Himself who does it. That He makes use of the mouth of someone else is not in itself strange, for that was already so in Old Testament times. Prophet = nabi = nebbe = our word “beak” = a mouth, namely a mouth of God. He uses the prophet as His mouth. God now uses us as His mouth. Insofar as it is the word of God, it is He who does it. He sees to it that His word is spoken.

Insofar as it is a victory, it is a victory because we let ourselves be used by Him and He therefore does His work in and through us. Whether that produces outward results is not the issue, for it always has effect—both in those who are saved and in those who perish. God attains His purpose with those who are saved, but also with those who perish. Even where people are condemned by God, that is to the honour of God. Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.

Every place stands alongside always. It is therefore always and everywhere, just as in Acts 17:30

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

God commands. He does so to all men in every place. Although Paul there in Athens preached the gospel all alone, he says that God does it. Everything God does, He does through the Lord Jesus Christ. We have come to know Christ as the High Priest of the New Covenant after the order of Melchizedek. The responsibility of the High Priest in particular is that His lips should keep the words of God—that is, speak them in the sense of the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The priests in general and the high priest in particular were responsible for keeping the word of God = guarding and preaching it.

Since Christ is the High Priest of the New Covenant, He is therefore responsible for the preaching of the word of God in our present time. We know the expression that He is the word of God. That is a metaphor. He is not that literally, but you can say so, for where He is, there is the word of God. Where that word is ministered, there He is the Minister. Where that word is spoken, there He is the Speaker, and where the word of God is carried out, there He is the Executor.

Executor = Ben = the Builder, the Son.

God makes manifest the savour of His knowledge. It concerns His knowledge. It is not merely about an opinion, a philosophy, or a particular worldview—though of course there is one behind it. It concerns knowledge. That is a hard word: the knowledge of the truth. You either know it or you do not. It is one or the other. That is also what preaching is. It is not persuading people to join the Lord, for that in practice means nothing at all. It concerns the knowledge of the word of God, the truth. The word of God is not called the word of truth for nothing. God speaks, and man should hear it, accept that word, and

set his trust upon it. It is the truth. That has nothing to do with religion. It concerns the knowledge of Him.

Savour of his knowledge. Savour obviously has to do with smelling. Smelling is the perceiving of gas = spirit. Savour is the perceiving of unseen things, of intangible things, of spiritual things. The knowledge of the word of God naturally consists of spiritual things. Those things cannot be seen. That is also why it must be preached. Those spiritual things are very real, but you cannot see them. Therefore you must hear about them. If you cannot see them with the eyes, then the ears must hear them.

The Light came into the world, and John came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light (John 1:7). He came to speak about the Light. Why? Because man was blind and could not see the Light. That concerns spiritual things. You cannot see them, and therefore they must be spoken of. If people appreciate that, then that savour is a sweet savour. Knowledge of spiritual things is made manifest. If you do not want to listen to the word of God, then in fact you are left with nothing at all. Or, as a theologian once said: "We know so little about God." What nonsense. He has written a book of 1200 pages of information about Him. But if you do not accept that, then indeed little knowledge of Him remains. If you want to know something about anything, you must let yourself be taught about it. Otherwise you will never come to know anything about it. You must of course check it, and that certainly applies to the word of God.

The whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and the whole Bible is the self-revelation of the Godhead—the progressive self-revelation of the Godhead. It is always about Him. If it is not about His being and His experience, then at any rate it is about His works. In the Bible the works of God are set over against the works of man, so that the Bible often speaks about man and his works as well. In Romans 3 it says that there is none that doeth good. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. Why is that written there? Because there the unrighteousness of man is set over against the righteousness of God. The question why God has still not put an end to the unrighteousness of man is so that we should learn what the righteousness of God is. It is not like the so-called righteousness of man. It concerns the contrast. If you want red to stand out well, you place blue beside it. A photograph without contrast is mist, bleeding. You get lost in that.

But in Romans 3 the righteousness of God is set over against the unrighteousness of man. Is the chapter then about the unrighteousness of man, or about the righteousness of God? About the righteousness of God. It may seem to be about the unrighteousness of man, but that is the contrast. That is what it is about. It concerns the savour of the knowledge of Christ—that through the word of God we come to know Him.

Ephesians 1:17

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

Knowledge of Him. That knowledge is also what 2 Corinthians 2:14 is about. The savour of His knowledge. That it has to do with the Spirit may be clear. The victory consists in that knowledge of Him also being made manifest, wherever Paul may be and in whatever circumstances he may find himself. He may not have been in Corinth, but somewhere else, yet the Corinthians should be just as glad about that.¹⁵ For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

It is an old Christian and also evangelical ideal that we should be a sweet savour of Christ; that we should be good Christians, representatives of Him. So that others can see from us that we are such good Christians, in order that those others may also come to faith and live just as decently as all those good Christians.

It would indeed be wonderful if that were so, and there is nothing against it, but it is not biblical. There are plenty of decent people who are not believers at all. That therefore says nothing, whereas something ought to be said. You do not need to be a decent person to preach or pass on the gospel, though it may help. Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. He evidently was not perfect either. Nevertheless he prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months (James 5:17). He was used by God. That is what it is about.

There are decent people and less decent people. There are also very many people who pass themselves off as Christians but do not know the Lord. That therefore says nothing at all.

It says: we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ. Who receives that sweet savour? Not the neighbours, but God. You must understand that this corresponds to Romans 12:1 and other places, where it is said that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. That is to say, a sweet-smelling savour, a sweet-smelling sacrifice, drawn from the imagery of the Levitical offerings under the Mosaic law. It concerns the Lord. We should be a sweet savour unto God, for we serve God and not men. If other people also smell that sweet savour, that would be fine, but that is not the purpose, though there is nothing against it. We should, however, be faithful to God, offering ourselves to Him as a sweet-smelling sacrifice.

Paul says: We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

In them that are saved. They are named first. After all, the Bible does not say that God wants all men to perish, but rather that He wants all men to be saved (2 Peter 3:9). That is why it is preached to all men everywhere that they should repent. To this day it is preached that that is not really the intention. Then a covering is placed over it, for it is only for the elect, for those who are members of "our church." The Bible says it is for everyone, but then those who are supposed to believe it come along and say it is not for everyone. They do not want to preach it to everyone either. To whom then? Well, from those gradations the different denominations arise. That is of course putting it simply, but that is more or less what it comes down to.

God does indeed want sinners to be judged. He does indeed want the ungodly, those who reject Him and His word, to be judged, so that they should no longer be. In general people have an opinion about God, even without any knowledge of the Bible. The question often asked is that if God is a righteous God, why does He do nothing about the unrighteousness in the world? He will do something about it, but He does it in His time. Now some reproach Him that He does not do it, and others reproach Him that He will do it and say: "That cannot be true, for the Bible says that God wants all men to be saved." Indeed, God wants all men to be saved, but most men do not want to be saved. The reason for that is that it is free. They want to earn it and be proud of what they have received, or what they possess. What can you be proud of if you have to say that you simply got it as a gift? Where then is the boasting? It is excluded.

We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, both in those who are saved and in those who perish. It is to the honour of God that sinners are condemned. It is to the honour of God

that Pharaoh and his armies perished in the Red Sea. It is to the honour of God that Israel was carried away into captivity, that Jerusalem was destroyed more than once. God keeps His word and is a righteous God. The problem therefore is that the preaching of the word of God also activates enmity, because people do not want the word of God. The preaching of the word of God sometimes also results in people being definitively lost, for the simple reason that they reject that word. We would personally prefer it otherwise, but that is human reasoning. It is no different. Therefore, for the sake of a quiet life, people add water to the wine. That, however, can have no positive effect—quite the contrary.

2 Corinthians 2:16

To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?

To those who perish it is the stench of a corpse, but to those who are saved a savour of life unto life. That is what the word of God accomplishes. Apart from that, the Bible speaks of the Last Day, when the dead, whoever they were, will stand before God and be judged there. God will indeed speak to them, and on that occasion, by God's speaking, the unbeliever is definitively judged and cast into the lake of fire, but the believers will be acquitted, justified, and enter the new creation. God is a righteous God. He justifies and also condemns—one or the other.

In Matthew 25 we read something similar, though there it is not about the Last Day but about the second coming of Christ and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth. We call that the judgement of the nations, when the nations appear before the face of the King. They are there divided into two groups and compared to sheep and goats. To the one group the King speaks and says: "Depart from me, I never knew you." That is said to religious people who themselves said: "In thy name have we done thus and so..." Then the Lord says He knows nothing of it. Away with them! The other group has served Him and is saved. In fact the same thing happens now. The word of God is preached, and there is a part that accepts it and a part that rejects it. Those who accept it receive eternal life thereby, and those who reject it do not. That means they are by definition lost. If they live a little longer they theoretically still have the chance to come to faith after all. That chance, however, becomes steadily smaller—not only because the time left to them in the flesh grows shorter, but also because of the hardening of the heart that results from rejection. So the Bible teaches as well.

And who is sufficient for these things? This expression is the summary of verses 14–16. These verses speak of Paul who triumphs everywhere and at all times in Christ, through whom the word of God is made manifest in every place, to the glory and honour of God. The question is who is sufficient for these things. There is discussion about the answer and even about the question itself. There need be no problem here at all, however. The story is told rather slowly here. Who is sufficient for these things is stated in 3:5.

2 Corinthians 3:5

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament...

Who is sufficient to triumph in every place and at all times? Evidently the one whom God has made sufficient for that. That is sufficiency from God. After that you can read it on a lower level and conclude that those who want to serve the Old Covenant are

necessarily insufficient to be a sweet savour of Christ unto God. The Old Covenant is a ministration of death and therefore also a savour of death. The answer is therefore not yet given, but later Paul says that they have at any rate been made sufficient for that by God.

2 Corinthians 2:17

For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.

We who are sufficient, we who triumph at all times in Christ, we who make manifest the knowledge of Him in every place—we do not, like many, corrupt the word of God. There are therefore those who do not do it from sincerity, who do not do it from God, and who do not do it in the consciousness of the presence of God Himself. They may perhaps speak the word of God, but they have other intentions. That is therefore no sweet savour unto God. Whether people come to faith through it? Perhaps. It could well be. We do not corrupt the word of God. Peter wrote: through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you (2 Peter 2:3). They will make merchandise of you, a business. That is indeed the case to a high degree. The richest international business in the world is the Roman Catholic Church. So it goes with religion, and so it has always been. Just read about Egypt and the pharaohs and the priests of Pharaoh. Whose was the land and who managed it? In practice it was in the hands of the priests. The king was after all supposed to be high priest, and vice versa. Thus in the name of God one served the king. It is religion that makes the land what it is and that also controls the economy. It is not in itself an unbiblical thought that the word of God is carried about for sale and that the church of God is a business, with profit and loss accounts and the like, but it appears that these words from 2 Corinthians 2:17 are drawn from Isaiah 1:22. Isaiah 1:22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:

Dross is to a high degree hollow. People add a dash of water to the wine. That practice is of all ages. And the silver—it is indeed silver, but it is hollow. It looks like silver, but that is only the outside. The inside is nothing, hollow. There need not necessarily be air in it; it can also be filled with another material.

Thy wine mixed with water. Water is far cheaper than wine. The water that is also in the wine is sold as wine too. That is falsification, and falsification for the sake of commerce. Mixed = mahal.

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it is translated with kapeleuō. That is exactly the word used in 2 Corinthians 2:17.

If you translate consistently, then it says that Paul and his companions do not mix the word of God with something else in order to market it better and earn more from it.

Mahal. Mehoela = I do not believe a word of it. It will have been mixed; it will be mahal. It looks like something, but it is certainly not pure coffee, wine, or word of God.

It therefore concerns haggling, trading. Carrying about for sale would in itself not be so very wrong, but it concerns diluting, adapting to man. There are plenty of theologians who say they adapt the content of the Bible to the times. People continue to delve into the Bible, but chiefly in such a way that they can do something with it in this present modern age. The word of God is no longer of this time, and so the Bible is adapted to this time. Thereby the theologians in fact determine this time. They are that time. If on the other hand we hold fast to tradition, then time does not change at all—as the Amish

do, for example, or the ultra-Orthodox Jews with their dress from three hundred years ago, from Poland. They live in a museum. Indeed, they are the museum. But we do not corrupt the word of God. We do not mix it, we do not dilute it, for it is also not for trade. Our ministry is also not directed to man but to God. Toward Him you cannot permit yourself to add water to the wine. We human beings, busy with earthly things—perhaps even with religious things—consult together and say that we had better not say this and had better say that, here some will take offence, and they find this too difficult. As human beings you can do all that, and perhaps there is even some understanding for it, but when it comes to the proclamation of the word of God you had better leave such considerations aside. The intention is that you serve the Lord, and with Him you cannot come with that sort of thing. Very well, you may get into trouble because of it, but it is war, and if you do not engage in it, you do not win it either. The expression “corrupt” (also in Greek, when it is a noun = a pedlar, hawker, huckster, innkeeper). The last perhaps does not belong in the list, but the innkeeper is by definition the one who adds water to the wine—or to the whisky—so that more glasses can be poured from one bottle. Haggling is quite a fitting word in this connection. It is trade, but not honest trade.

We draw the picture of water and wine from the word “mixed” in Isaiah 1:22. That does seem applicable here, because we know the phenomenon that wine comes first of all from water, both in the normal way and by the wonderful way. Water is turned into wine, in which water is a picture of the word of God and wine a picture of eternal life. One might see that water in general is a picture of the word of God. That is, up to the days of Paul, the Old Testament.

You should not mix that water with the wine. That is also the greatest problem in the history of Christendom: that people have always been inclined to mix the New Covenant with the Old. In so doing they detract from the grace of God by mixing it with law. In the Bible it is either the one or the other. Those two are opposites. We should not mix those things—or, to put it in the words of Hebrews 2:1, we should not let them slip. For mixing two things that should not be mixed.

It is clear that this is what is meant here, because the very next chapter immediately contrasts the New Testament with the Old. You also arrive at this through the imagery of wine and water, though one must be a little cautious with that imagery.

2 Corinthians 3:1

Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you, or letters of commendation from you?

As a comment on: “Who is sufficient for these things?” Evidently there already existed the practice of needing a certificate or attestation of reliability. Paul says they do not require such things. Nowadays there are plenty who say we do need them, because it was customary among the Corinthians. Yet precisely from this context it should be clear that this is mistaken. Our sufficiency is not because men deem us sufficient and give us a letter of recommendation, but our sufficiency is of God. Do we then need such letters of commendation, such credentials of faith, stating to whom we are loyal and whom we represent? No, for our sufficiency is of God. “Moreover,” says Paul...

2 Corinthians 3:2

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:
If you want to know whether I am a minister of God, well then, you yourselves are that epistle. You are the result of my labour, of my preaching of the gospel in Corinth.

2 Corinthians 3:3

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

Here the apostle shifts to a higher level. He immediately compares one thing with another in terms of the Old and New Covenants. In the Old Testament it is already stated that the Old Covenant was engraved on tables of stone and thus indeed written with a stylus—in the KJV, a “griffie.” God, however, would write the New Covenant on the hearts of men. That is therefore a spiritual matter.

2 Corinthians 3:4 -5

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward.

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

Paul derives his authority from God Himself and, on the other hand, from the results of his labour. From the way God has blessed his labour and thus also from the way the church in Corinth came into being—namely through the ministry of Paul. If the church in Corinth came into being through his labour, then he has the responsibility, but also the right, to concern himself with that church and thus, among other things, to write these epistles. This is the constant background to both Corinthian epistles. It keeps recurring. His sufficiency is of God. That does not mean he does not speak from what is in his heart, but that what is in his heart has been written there by God. That is the true origin. So it still is in our days. Of course, you can speak words from your heart, but that in itself says nothing, for of the false prophets in the Old Testament it is said that they were false prophets because they spoke from their heart—that is, from their own heart. The point is, of course, that it should be from God. What comes from God is placed in the heart, and through the heart it is then spoken again.⁶ Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

God has made us sufficient to be ministers of the New Covenant and therefore not of the Old Covenant. This is emphasised in what follows.

Not ministers of the letter. That is evidently the letter of the tables of stone, the engraved letter, or possibly the letter written with ink, as a reference to the written books of the Old Testament and probably also to the written Jewish tradition.

God has made us sufficient to be ministers of the New Covenant of the Spirit (fleshy tables of the heart, from verse 3). If you read the Scripture references given under verse 3, you will see that they speak of tables of stone, but also of a new spirit within man. Heart and spirit overlap. Both words can denote what is within man.

Ministers, not rulers. No church princes, no bosses.

Ministers = diakonos = deacons.

The letter = the Old Covenant;

The spirit = the New Covenant.

In Galatians 4 also the Old and New Covenants are set against each other by means of Old Testament symbolism. Here too it is about symbolism, namely the law engraved on tables of stone. Tables of stone that one had to carry as a stony burden. That one let fall and break, as Moses demonstrated when he came down from the mountain and threw the two tables of stone to pieces, signifying that the Old Covenant would one day come to an end. Moses was a prophet, and as one of his prophetic acts he smashed the two tables of stone. But also symbolism in the covering that Moses placed over his face. Symbolism is a far easier method than explaining things doctrinally. That is much more theoretical, and it is therefore much harder to form a mental picture of it and to set forth the difference between the Old and New Covenants.

Galatians 4:21

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Implying that they were expected to understand that law. What were they supposed to understand? For example, the symbolism in Genesis.

22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

26 But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.

28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

The bondwoman and the freewoman are a picture respectively of the Old and New Covenants. And then someone says: "But this is symbolism and one must be very careful with it." That is true, but this is also the word of God. One must always be careful with that. Nevertheless, it says here that those who lived under the law were expected to understand these things. It is not so difficult either.

For example: The apple does not fall far from the tree. Then you say: "That is symbolism and one must be careful with it." That is true, but everyone knows what it means. The apple is produced by the tree. It falls from the tree and becomes independent of the tree, yet it lies close by. If Abraham, the heir of the birthright blessing, has two sons, the question is which of the two sons will inherit. Not the one by the bondwoman, but the one by the freewoman. In other words, if you live under the law as a slave of the law, you will not inherit, for the promises are fulfilled to the free. Insofar as promises were made to Israel in general, they must first be delivered from the Old Covenant of law, for only then will they inherit. The Messianic promises will indeed be fulfilled to Israel, but as

long as they place themselves under the law and thus not under the New Covenant, those promises will not be fulfilled to them.

Those who, despite everything, insist on holding to the Old Covenant and reject the New Covenant will therefore be killed when the promises under the New Covenant are fulfilled. There is no other way. That is also written plainly in the Bible, but even without those plain statements this symbolism should be clear enough.

You simply write everything that stands for the law on the left side of a sheet of paper, and everything that stands for the New Covenant in a column on the right side of that paper.

Law	New Covenant
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Bondwoman	Freewoman
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Ishmael	Isaac
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Hagar	Sarah
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Born after the flesh Born by promise

Which things are an allegory. Not that I can or do give them another meaning. Those things are an allegory. You must therefore study to understand what that allegory is, but they are that allegory.

These are the two covenants. The one from mount Sinai (left column), gendering to bondage (left column).

Hagar = Sinai = the Old Covenant.

Sinai, a mountain in Arabia = left column.

Arabia = bondage. By the way: Islam. That is not stated, but you can arrive at that thought.

Jerusalem which now is | Jerusalem which is above It is not only symbolism from Genesis, but also from Isaiah 54. It is symbolism, but it is there so that we should understand it, even though it is not explained. It must be clear without more. It is drawn from Sarah, the desolate one, with whom no conception, no impregnation took place. Nevertheless her children would be more than the children of Hagar. Of course this one too would become great, yet Isaac would become greater than he. The greater would serve the lesser. One would become nations and the other a multitude of nations. Whether it is about Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, or Manasseh and Ephraim does not matter. It is repeated many times and it concerns a general principle.

A similar exposition is therefore found in 2 Corinthians 3, namely tables of stone over against fleshy tables of the heart. Then the New Testament over against the Old Testament; then the letter over against the spirit. Then killing over against making alive. The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. Then...

2 Corinthians 3:7 -8

But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away:

8 How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?

The glory of the New Covenant far exceeds the glory of the Old Covenant. The blessings of Jacob exceed those of Esau, to such an extent that Esau did indeed receive a blessing, yet he hated his brother Jacob because of the blessing he had received, for it meant that Esau would be subject to Jacob. Although Esau was blessed, he was still

envious. Think also of Cain and Abel, right at the beginning of the Bible; it is exactly the same story.

But how then was the law glorious? The law had so much glory that the people of Israel could only look at the face of Moses for a very short time. The face of Moses shone. The face of Moses had received light from the Lord. His face shone so intensely that it hurt the eyes of the onlookers. Then they asked him to place a covering over his face. He did so. Nevertheless, it is a picture of glory. The covering over it is a picture of the law. The covering of the head is a picture of the authority under which one stands and thus under the authority of the law. That is why we should behold the Lord with unveiled face and reject the covering.

2 Corinthians 3:9

For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.

The ministration of death (v. 7) and now the ministration of condemnation. In contrast stands the ministration of righteousness, the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:10

For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.

That which was made glorious is here again the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is in a certain sense not glorious at all when compared with the excelling glory of the New Covenant. When the spotlights come on, you can well switch off your torch, for it is then of no further use. Proportionately it gives no light at all. Compared with the New Covenant the Old Covenant has no glory.

2 Corinthians 3:11

For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.

However glorious the Old Covenant may have been, it was to be done away. However much light it gave, that light would one day go out. That which remains is therefore in any case more glorious. In several respects the glory of the Old Covenant is therefore negligible compared with the excelling glory of the New Covenant. That New Covenant is the preaching—not the Old.

How, after reading this passage of Scripture, can anyone entertain the idea of mixing the Old and New Covenants? Of holding to law under the New Covenant? How can one still live under the law, as covenant theology teaches? Even in evangelical circles, where in general there is no theology at all, people are still inclined to mix law and grace. What exactly are you mixing then? The very thought of it is absurd. These are two things that absolutely cannot tolerate each other.

Moreover, because of the riches of God's grace, law means nothing any more. When it is broad daylight and you then switch on your torch, that makes no sense at all. We live in the light of the New Covenant. That torch has no place in it. Suppose there are laws under the New Covenant, but if no sanctions attach to them—because we live from the riches of God's grace—what would such a law do? It would have no force at all! You may think man needs it, but that is philosophy. The Bible says that is not what man needs,

but what children need. According to Midas Dekkers, however, children are not human beings but larvae. They still have to become human.
The light of the New Covenant is greater and lasts longer. The Old Covenant is little light, and it goes out.

2 Corinthians 3: 12

Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:
We have an abiding hope. That is a wonderful message. Therefore we use great plainness of speech. That is what Paul does. That is his explanation for his speaking and for the way he speaks. The Corinthians wanted none of it. They preferred to listen to philosophy, but in that law is precisely developed. Rules for living, which people either kept or did not. Then you could quarrel over them and bring lawsuits about them. Read the first epistle to the Corinthians! The Corinthians were decidedly unreceptive to these things of the New Covenant.

Plainness of speech is also used in the epistle to the Hebrews: entering by a new and living way, whereby we may come with boldness to the throne of grace. Courage may be needed for that, but we should do it. The epistle to the Hebrews is about the New Covenant and its glory. The glorified Christ, Jesus, crowned with glory and honour, did not glorify Himself to be High Priest, but He who said to Him, “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 5:5).

2 Corinthians 3:13

And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

Moses placed a veil over his face. Paul says that is not what we do. We use great plainness of speech. Away with that covering!

Moses saw certain things on Sinai, in the broad sense of the term. He perceived certain things. Hebrews 8 says that the ordinances, the service of the Old Covenant, serve the ordinances of the New Covenant. The things of the Old Covenant serve to record, illustrate, and perhaps also communicate and pass on the things of the New Covenant. Concerning the priesthood and the tabernacle it says quite concretely: “Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.” They serve as example and shadow. Shadow is really darkness, but if there is no light, you also have no shadow.

Shadow = foreshadowing, of heavenly things.

Hebrews 8:5

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Moses was to make the tabernacle according to a pattern shown to him, referring to Exodus 25.

Moses was to make the tabernacle according to a pattern he had seen. What did Moses see on the mountain? As a superficial Westerner you might think he saw a model and then copied it on a larger scale. It was probably not like that. He saw the spiritual truths belonging under the New Covenant. Afterwards he built a tabernacle in which those spiritual values—or truths—were given form. That sort of thing is called representational art, in which rather abstract matters are expressed in forms. That immediately answers

the question why those two other men, Bezaleel and Aholiab, had to be taught by the Spirit of God—not in carpentry and fretwork, but in how to give certain things form and why those forms and materials had to be chosen.

Moses was on the mountain where Paul was also later (2 Corinthians 12), where he saw unspeakable things. Very probably Elijah saw the same things on that same mountain. Those were probably the same things Moses saw on the mountain, but not the model of the tabernacle. The tabernacle was the real model and is a picture of higher things. Example, image, typos, type, works both ways. The one is a type of the other, and the other is a type of the one. Whether the heavenly things are now the pattern of the tabernacle, or the tabernacle of the heavenly things, makes no difference. They are types of each other. If you want to strengthen the word “type,” you call it antitype, but the meaning remains the same. The translators then render it “counterpart,” but a counterpart, image, or example is in all cases the same.

The point is that Moses saw there the characteristics and truths of the New Covenant. When he came down from the mountain the Lord said to him: “See that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.” The Lord did not say to him: “See that thou tell everything thou hast seen.” He was not allowed to speak of it, but had to record those things in images, in material. The law is therefore image-service, even though the law knows no images of saints or the like, but it is nevertheless image-service. They are not indeed pictures of what God looks like, but of how God acts. They are casts.

A type is an impression, and the impression is a type of the original, and the original is in turn a type of the impression. Sometimes reversed, mirrored, so that the likeness does not immediately strike us, but it all exists. It concerns the repetition of a theme. That also happens in music. That is called a motif and keeps recurring. Sometimes reversed, sometimes upside down. If you have no imagination left at all, you make fugues. Then you take a line and reverse it and place it under the other line. One plays the line from front to back, the other from back to front: that is called a fugue. That is also a recognised method in the visual arts. You repeat things, you make things symmetrical, you reverse things, and so on.

In any case, Moses had seen certain things but was not allowed to speak of them. Elijah must also have seen certain things, but you do not even read that. What was that man doing on Mount Horeb anyway? He was sent there. The only thing you read about it is that the Lord appeared to him there, when a still small voice came. Why at that place? He received there the command to anoint a king. What did he see there and what did that have to do with his commission? Nothing is said about it. So you are left with your questions. Those things were veiled there. It was not the intention that they should be revealed, but they were there.

One of the nice things about the New Testament is that we search for the meaning of all that image-service under the Old Covenant. That they have a certain meaning is expressly taught us, among other places, here in the epistle to the Hebrews. As to how it all fits together, we get only a few hints, and that is where it stops. Yet that should be sufficient for us.

Moses therefore was not allowed to speak of it. He had only to give it form. Then came Paul. He too was on that mountain and saw certain things, and it was not permitted him to utter those things. Strangely enough, that is one of the most confusing texts in the New Testament. Why was he not allowed to utter them? If you follow the line in the

second epistle to the Corinthians, it becomes clear that he was not allowed to utter them to the Corinthians, for they did not want to hear it. Paul complains about himself. He wants to speak of it, but the Corinthians do not want to hear it. They are wonderful things, excellently more glorious than the things of the Old Covenant.

Here in 2 Corinthians 3 he says that he uses great plainness of speech and places no covering over his words. He makes these things manifest with boldness, but the Corinthians do not appreciate it. Grace is an impossibility for the old man. He cannot be governed by grace. Something else is needed for that, namely eternal life, life with different properties within itself. That is perfect life, the life of Christ. That life makes it possible for grace to reign. That makes it possible for the covering of the Old Covenant to be taken away.

And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.

They therefore did not see that that glory was passing away. Those who live under the law do not realise that that law would be ended. That is also the snare and trap of Judaism. People hold fast to the law, but if they truly knew the law, they would also know that it would be ended and that the promised great blessings, related to the coming and work of the Messiah, mean the ending of the law and thereby also of the Jewish law and thereby the ending of Judaism, in the religious sense of the term. That is stated literally in Jeremiah 31, which we just read above. There can be no doubt about it. Not to mention all those other statements in which the ending of the Old Covenant is announced, or those places in which the coming of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek is announced. Paul paraphrases those Scripture passages and says that when such a One comes, this means the end of the Old Covenant. That means the end of the Levitical priesthood after the order of Aaron, but because that priesthood is inherent to the dominion of the law, there is therefore necessarily a change of the covenant (Hebrews 7:12) when that Priest after the order of Melchizedek comes. People do not see that, and therefore in our days, even in Christendom, they have the greatest difficulty with the epistle to the Hebrews. For if there is such a High Priest of the New Covenant, then this means the end of the Old Covenant. They do not know what to do with that. They must, like Paul, start all over again and do their homework afresh.

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which vail is done away in Christ.

The concept of covering is now applied in all sorts of other ways. That is how it works. Their minds were blinded—their senses. It is not so much the senses themselves, but the processing of what one perceives.

Their mind = their thinking. Their mind is to a high degree the processing of what their senses perceive. You take in information through tools, instruments, that are used. They see indeed; the tool works, but they do not perceive. They hear indeed, but they do not understand (Isaiah 6:10; Ezekiel 12:2; Matthew 13:13; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:40; Acts 28:26; Romans 11:8).

Their minds were blinded—hardened. Hard also means difficult. Someone who is hard of hearing hears with difficulty. Someone who is hard to teach does not learn quickly; he learns hard, with difficulty. Hard driving does not mean it goes fast, but that it goes with difficulty. Their minds were blinded—they no longer function.

The same veil that lay over the face of Moses now lies over the senses of what is here called Israel, or that veil lies over their Bible. Hardening is sometimes also callus. You can have callus on your heart or callus on your soul. It makes them insensitive. Their minds were blinded: for until this day the same veil remains in the reading of the old testament, untaken away, which veil is done away in Christ. Notice that it does not say: which veil shall be done away by Christ. That is true, but that is not what it says. The simple thought is that when one comes to accept Jesus as the Christ, then the veil disappears afterwards. Not the other way round. That is why the preaching in Acts is preaching in which the Jews were first preached to. In particular Paul opens the Scriptures to them and explains from the Scriptures who the Christ is, and then shows that all those things apply to Jesus of Nazareth. He demonstrates thereby that the Christ is Jesus. They should believe that. Only afterwards is the veil taken away by Paul, because Christ Himself is deemed to be the One who opens the Scriptures to us. He is the One who speaks. For God of old spoke to the fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by the Son. Therefore we should the more earnestly heed what is spoken (Hebrews 1:1; 2:1). We should take heed that we refuse not Him that speaketh (Hebrews 12:25). It is the Lord Himself, through His Spirit, who would lead us into all truth. He is the One who takes away the veil, but that happens only after one has accepted Him as Saviour, as Messiah, and thus as High Priest of the New Covenant. That is one of the problems that arise in the study of the Bible. If you do not come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you will understand nothing of the Scriptures. The Lord sees to that too. The veil is taken away only when you first come to faith in the Lord Jesus. Then He is the One who opens the Scriptures to us, who opens our hearts to us, and who opens our eyes to us. That is the order, and not the other way round.

2 Corinthians 3:15

But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless, when Moses is read, there lies a veil over the Old Testament, but here it says over their heart. It is as it were a covering, a separation, a curtain, between the word and the heart. That corresponds to the veil that made a separation between the Old and New Covenants—namely between the holy and the most holy, between the glorious and the excellently glorious. We know that for certain, for it is plainly stated in black and white in Hebrews 9 and 10.

2 Corinthians 3:16

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. That is the order. Not that the Lord will one day take away the veil and then you will be converted by the Lord. That is what many think, but that is not what the Bible says. Many teach that and tie to it that it therefore makes no sense to preach the gospel to the Jews, for they cannot come to faith because God has hardened them. The Lord must therefore first take away the covering; only then do they come to faith. However, they have been hardened through unbelief, and thereby they cultivate resistance and a covering. That covering is only taken away again when they stop that resisting. In this discussion people often make use of a statement in John 12 from verse 37...

John 12:37

But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

Here you see that the signs are a means of communication. Not the words, but the things the Lord did. Those things have a transferred meaning.

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again,

40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Therefore they could not believe. Therefore people say that they cannot believe because God has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. The Lord has therefore determined it Himself and He must therefore also Himself put an end to it. That, however, is making somewhat improper use of the formulation here and not understanding it properly. In the first place these expressions do not appear here for the first time. They are drawn from Isaiah 6. He spoke these things when he saw His glory and spoke of Him. There Isaiah caught a glimpse of heaven, where he saw the Lord on a high and exalted throne. Here it is said that that is a picture of the glory of the Lord Jesus. On that occasion those words stand.

If it says that they therefore could not believe, then the question is why they could not believe. The answer is that they could not believe because Isaiah had said something. The point is not that a Jew could not come to faith, for in the New Testament we find many Jews who came to faith. You can therefore never say that a Jew living under the law cannot come to faith. Thousands came to faith already in Jerusalem alone. That happens to this day. The idea that it cannot happen because God has put a stop to it by hardening their hearts is untenable. So there is something else going on.

What it is about is simply this: that it is not about the conversion of an individual Jew, but about the conversion of the Jewish people as a whole. You must know that distinction. The people is not the individual, and the individual is not the people. You can certainly preach the gospel to the Jews, and indeed Jews will come to faith. History has proved that. It is, however, the intention that the Jewish people should also come to faith as a people. That, however, will not happen. It did not happen in the days of the Lord Jesus, although the gospel was preached to the people as a people, and it does not happen in our days either.

The call therefore to preach the gospel to the Jewish people as a people makes little sense. It will not come to faith anyway. Why not? Because it cannot. If you then say that if individual Jews can come to faith, therefore all individual Jews can come to faith, after which you therefore have a converted Jewish people, then that cannot happen, for the simple reason that the Bible says that this will only happen at the second coming of Christ. So it does not happen today, nor yesterday, nor tomorrow. It is technically possible, but it does not happen—at least not before the second coming of Christ. In Acts 2 Peter says that the Lord Jesus could not be held by death. Why could death not hold Him? People have thought up all sorts of answers to that, simply passing over Peter's answer in Acts 2. They say that He is the Son of God and for that reason death could not hold Him. Why not? He could also come into it. Then it says: "Because David in Psalm 16 said, Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27). Peter says that this concerns the resurrection of Christ. Why could death not hold Him? Death could well have done, but God had said that it would

not happen and that He would raise Him on the third day. Therefore it could not. It was technically possible, but that was not an option, because God had said it would not go that way.

Why can the Jewish people not come to faith? Simply because God has said it will not happen, but only in the future. Must we then not preach the gospel to the Jews? Yes, we must, for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. Not to say that it changed later because Paul did not know better when he said that. Others have invented that as an argument. You then have to reason away a great many passages, but that is not necessary.

The Jewish people as a people will not come to faith because God has said it will not happen. Moreover, He has said when it will happen.

They would first come to faith, and then the Lord would take away the veil and heal them (John 12:40). Back to 2 Corinthians 3.

The veil is done away by Christ (v. 14). That is therefore so now as well, but then one must first come to Christ. You can be healed by the Lord, but then you must first go to the Lord, or be brought to Him. So it was also with all those signs.

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away.

That therefore concerns the people. After it shall have turned, the veil is taken away. Not before. We know that too, because it is announced in the prophecies. At the end of the seventieth week of Daniel they will call on the name of the Lord on the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem (Joel 2; Zechariah 13), in connection with the second coming of Christ. It concerns seventy weeks, and those seventy weeks are determined upon "thy people." They will then indeed call on the name of the Lord, and fairly literally the veil will then be taken away afterwards. It has been announced that Israel will indeed come to faith, but by seeing. There then immediately follows: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," but it is the reference to the faith of Israel that comes about after they see whom they have pierced, after the example of Thomas, who was the last of the disciples to come to faith, but only after he had seen it with his own eyes.

They will call on the Lord. He then appears on the Mount of Olives. Afterwards He shows them His hands and His feet, and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced.

Only then do they come to faith.

Coming to repentance and faith are strictly speaking two different things. They are directly connected, but the idea is that the people of Israel will call on the Lord, and when He appears, He proves to be Jesus of Nazareth. Then the veil is taken away, and they believe that the Christ is Jesus. To this day that is not so, for the general thought in Judaism remains that a Messiah may come, but that is then still a man. They are of course right about that, but they are slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Of course He is the Son of David and even the Son of Joseph, but He is also the Son of God. They miss that aspect, and that is demonstrated in the Gospels. Who is the Christ; whose son is He? "Of David," they say. The Lord Jesus then says: "But why does David then call Him Lord?" Then they are left without an answer. But of course because He is the Son of God. In Judaism they have difficulty with that, but in Christendom they again have difficulty with His being man. The Jews believe one side of the story, the Christians believe the other side of the story. Then they quarrel with one another.

Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the vail shall be taken away (by Christ, v. 14). When one turns to the Lord, He reveals Himself. Revealing means “taking away the covering.” He reveals Himself and proves to be the Messiah: Jesus of Nazareth.

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. It concerned a ministry of the Spirit and a turning to the Lord. He is the Spirit. Where that Spirit—namely the Lord—is (Spirit of the Lord does not mean Spirit of the Lord, but the Spirit, namely the Lord), there is liberty. Under the service of the Old Covenant there is no liberty. That is called captivity. One is kept under it. Moreover, one is a slave there and therefore not free: a slave of the law, a slave of sin, and a slave of death. The Old Covenant is here in this chapter called a ministration of death and of condemnation. Where that New Covenant is in operation and where grace therefore reigns, where the excelling glory of that New Covenant is made manifest to us, there is the Spirit, there is the Lord, and there is therefore liberty.

If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:31–32). The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17).

The problem of the Corinthians was that they did not want to become free. The problem of many people, even unbelievers, is that they do not want to be free. They have agoraphobia. That is a phobia. Most phobias are more or less caricatures of the things that occupy people’s minds. Phobias can also be regarded as types. Someone who has agoraphobia is afraid to be free. If he stands in the open space, he must determine his own direction. Some people feel wonderful in a crowded company, in a mass where you cannot turn round, but try to do so (others do too, by the way). Then you cannot go anywhere and you are a prisoner. If on the contrary you cannot stand that, then you have claustrophobia.

Nevertheless, the New Covenant places us in open space. We called that place Rehoboth, for the LORD hath made room for us (Genesis 26:22).

Since then the name Rehoboth has adorned quite a number of Christian buildings. People evidently do not realise that it concerns the spaciousness of the New Covenant. The sons of the prophets went to Elisha and said: “The place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us. Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell.” And he answered, “Go ye.” So one of them said, “Be content, I pray thee, and go with thy servants.” And he answered, “I will go.” So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, “Alas, master! for it was borrowed.” And the man of God said, “Where fell it?” And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim. Therefore said he, “Take it up to thee.” And he put out his hand, and took it (2 Kings 6:1–7).

That building of a new dwelling is the dawning of the New Covenant. That something then went wrong, and the axe head flew off the handle and fell into the Jordan and later floated up again—that is what went wrong at the dawning of the New Covenant. In any case, spaciousness was already in the Old Testament a picture of the liberty under the New Covenant.

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Liberty, because under the New Covenant we are delivered from the dominion of sin, death, and law.

The problem with liberty is that you bear responsibility in it and must go your own way. That many Christians do not want to stand in liberty probably arises from the idea that all Christians are led by God in their lives. Then they are also afraid of liberty. Yet the Lord sets us down somewhere and says: "Here thou hast what thou needest; occupy till I come." See to it! Then the responsibility does indeed lie with us. We must learn to grow up and go our ways, with the Lord and in accordance with His will, but within the broad limits He has set for us to that end. Those limits are very broad. We stand in liberty. That at conversion the veil is taken away applies not only to the Jewish people but also to those Corinthians. That is why it is naturally stated here in this way. The Corinthians themselves lived as it were under this veil. Perhaps not because they clung rigidly to the Old Covenant, but because they did not want to come to the acknowledgement of and a life under that New Covenant, of which not Moses but Christ is the Head.

Hence Paul says that when one comes to conversion, the veil is taken away by the Lord Himself (v. 16), or by Christ Himself (v. 14). Those things apply just as much to us.

It is a misunderstanding to think that if you now only read or study or believe the Bible, then everything else will be all right. That is not so, and that is not the intention. The intention is that one should come to the Lord Jesus Christ, or as it is stated elsewhere, that one should come with boldness unto the throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), or as it is stated in yet another place, that one should present one's body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1)—and thus that one should acknowledge the Lord Jesus and submit oneself to Him. Only then does He take away the veil. This is in contrast to common Christian or evangelical values, which teach that the Lord submits Himself to us. They do not of course say so outright, but that is what they mean. Even unbelievers know that. They think we believe that the Lord does all sorts of things for us, if only we put Him under enough pressure by praying in relay for days on end. Then He will eventually do what we ask of Him. Or, if we celebrate extensively, for we are after all so glad. If we just celebrate and dance and leap. As compensation for our effort He will then surely do something for us. It may not be kind to say such things, but it is useful to distance oneself from quite a number of matters that pass for Christian and/or evangelical, because they are not biblical.

The Bible teaches that we should come to submission to, to humiliation before, to kneeling before the Lord Jesus Christ, who has been highly exalted, even to the right hand of God. Respect for Christ as Authority befits us. Unfortunately we in our society abolished long ago the concepts of respect and authority. People no longer know what that means. Nevertheless, that is what this is about. Reverence!

Just as taking responsibility. When does that still happen nowadays? When in politics people take responsibility, they step aside. They resign. Evidently they do not know what taking responsibility means. And these are supposed to be office-holders! They bear no authority at all, which shows they were always in the wrong place.

In our days we must get used to the idea that there is an Authority, that there is Someone on the throne whom we cannot remove and against whom we cannot rebel either. Well, you can try, but that is ridiculous. God says: "The heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing," but He laughs: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision and say, 'Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion'" (Psalm 2). There is nothing more to be done about it. What we should do, and

what the Corinthians should do, and the Jewish people—we should submit ourselves to Him. That has nothing to do with sitting here cosily and being all right, it has nothing to do with feeling good about it, or having a nice church or society or something of the sort, but with our having become subjects, servants of Christ Jesus. Him we should serve. The question is not primarily what He does for us, but how we stand toward Him. Whether we feel good about it will be dealt with in the next chapter.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Not looking into the mirror, for that would make the matter diffuse again. People then read 1 Corinthians 13:12 into it...

1 Corinthians 13:12

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

Seeing through a glass darkly means that we do not understand everything. That is not the thought in 2 Corinthians 3. In the context of 2 Corinthians 3 it is precisely about so many having a veil over their heart, their ears, their Bible, and therefore not understanding. But for us the veil is taken away. Where that happens we do not look in a glass darkly; on the contrary! There we reflect the glory of the Lord.

The translators have made a metaphor of it, as though we look into a mirror, but we reflect, in the way set forth above. In the way of Moses. He stood with unveiled face before the Lord, while when he spoke to the people he placed a veil over his face. We should precisely not do that. Under the New Covenant nothing is veiled. On the contrary. What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, God has revealed to us by His Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). One of our blessings is that God hath made known unto us the mystery of his will (Ephesians 1:9). Yet we also know that Christians in general, but especially evangelical Christians—82% of them—have no interest in the Bible. It is unbelievable. People speak of Jesus before and Jesus after, but the only source for knowledge of who He is—the Bible—they have no interest in. Who is this Jesus they speak of? Who is this Jesus in whose name they supposedly heal others or supposedly cast out evil spirits—which are back again the next day? Who is this Jesus? How does one know Him? From the Bible? No, for they have no interest in that.

Nevertheless, Paul says that one thing is important: forgetting those things which are behind, to know Him and the power of his resurrection (Philippians 3:10). That is quite different from our being the fastest-growing church or denomination in the Netherlands or something of the sort.

Because we reflect the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image. That is also the intention. The intention is that we should be changed into the image of God's Son, that we should be conformed to the image of God's Son. That is denied everywhere, for people teach that man is by nature the image-bearer of God. Why then should he be changed into that image? Those are fatal misunderstandings. People have no interest in it, and therefore those things do not take place, and this sort of Scripture passage is not understood either. That they do not understand it is evident from most commentaries on such passages.

We are changed into the same image = into the image of the Lord, before whose face we stand. Only therefore if we stand before His face, as Moses did. That glory of the Lord

clung to Moses and was then seen by the people. He began, so to speak, to resemble the Lord. That is described here and is in accordance with the preceding verses and with what is still described in the next chapter. In other words, you have no room to give verse 18 any other meaning than the one stated above. Insofar as our faces are unveiled, insofar as we have gone to the Lord without reserves, without prior conditions, and have submitted ourselves to Him and said to Him: “Lord, here I am...,” then we are afterwards, as a consequence of that, changed into His image. The Bible says that we shall then be changed by the renewing of our mind. As a consequence we shall prove what is the good and perfect will of the Lord for our own life (Romans 12:2). Where this does not happen, you get all sorts of figures walking about who write books to tell us what the good and perfect will of the Lord is for our lives. Then you can take a discipleship course. Or you go to a conference to discover what gifts you have received from the Lord—evidently because the Lord Himself cannot make that clear. It all sounds very pious, but in reality people stand in the way of the Lord’s work. They put themselves in the place of Christ. There is incidentally another word for that too, and it is also in the Bible.

Do not therefore underestimate the seriousness of such a passage of Scripture! Paul also tried to bring that home to the Corinthians. He did not succeed.

We are changed into the same image from glory to glory. We are changed from the relative glory of the Old Covenant to the much greater and excelling glory of the New Covenant. Even as by the Spirit of the Lord, for He does it. Well, it says: “as by the Lord.” But the Lord is the Spirit.

What does the Spirit do? He changes us from glory to glory. He changes us into the image of God’s Son. The Lord does that, but He is called Spirit. He is called Spirit because He does it in secret and because it happens inwardly. Not outwardly. The inward does indeed express itself outwardly, but that is not yet the point here. The work of the Lord today happens by definition hidden from the world. It is not the intention that it should be seen. Manifestation and appearing come only at the second coming of Christ. You should not run ahead of that; the Lord does not do so either.

- The Power of Gospel Preaching

2 Corinthians 4:1

Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; Why? Seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy. Therefore we faint not. In any case Paul and Timothy have this ministry that the preceding section spoke of. God has made them sufficient to be ministers of the new testament (3:6). Ministers, namely, of the ministry of the Spirit and of life. That is not something you do occasionally for the occasion. That has nothing to do with rotating functions, or that it is nice to do once. Such things do not exist in the Bible; among us they do. That is management. That whole principle assumes that all people are equal and that if there are ministries, they should be done in turn.

The Bible teaches first of all that all people are not equal and that moreover not all believers are equal. In the world a few centuries ago it was invented that all people are equal. Afterwards Christendom embraced this, so that people think all Christians are equal. The text used for that is this: “There is but one Father and we are all brethren,” or: “Call no man your master upon the earth.”

We are all servants. That is indeed biblical, but we are not all equal. Among the believers we all receive different responsibility. We all have different functions and should not interfere with one another in them. Paul even says that if we have a ministry, we should simply do what we must do, without discussion. That has been translated as: without gainsaying. Do all things without murmurings and disputings (Philippians 2:14), but it says: "Do all things without murmurings and reasonings." Each knows his own responsibility and does it. The Lord directs the things, being the Head of the church. One is a foot in the body, another a hand. That is clear enough.

In any case, Paul says that he has received this ministry and therefore he does not faint. Faint = collapse; hold something back; do it a little and for the most part withdraw from the ministry.

How did Paul come by this ministry? As we have received mercy. In other places he uses the word grace. That is a synonym for it. "By the grace of God I am what I am," or: "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). In Christendom it is not about emotion, about feeling, but about the knowledge of the truth. If people do not know that truth or say they cannot know it, then they say this because in reality they are not interested in it and have more interest in feeling, experience, and emotion (for hormones) than in concrete knowledge. We can build a party and that is very nice and cosy, but tomorrow is the next day. Then you have headache and muscle ache and must simply go back to work and hope the Lord comes soon. That is even biblically justifiable. But if we learn something here today, then we know it tomorrow and the day after. That is stable. Stability is lacking. Because only people are walking about who are hobbying. They have their ideal worldview, or pretend the world is as they think it is, or because they think it should be so, but afterwards they come home from a cold fair. Because people do not know and have no certainties and do not want to face reality. That applies not only to the world, but for children of God it is exactly the same. They take the views current in the world with them into their faith community, so that it works exactly the same there. Delayed, admittedly, because they do not invent those things themselves. They must wait until those things gain acceptance in the world, and then they are also introduced into the church.

Paul does not faint because of the grace of God given to him.

"By the grace that is given to me, I say unto you..." (Romans 12:3), for the man has a ministry. He says there that not only he has received that grace, but that every believer has received at least one such grace. If you want to know which grace that is, then you should not look it up in the booklets on the book table, from those managers who have crept into our Christian communities and come to tell us how it should be, but you simply go to the Lord and ask Him. Then you will say that He does not say much, but He has at least written a very thick Book. Moreover, He may not say much, but He simply sets you before it: "Here it is; this is your course. Take it or leave it." Can you not get another one? No, that cannot be. He is the Master.

Therefore we do not faint. How many believers actually realise that grace means more than only forgiveness of sins? And then, how many believers actually understand that grace means forgiveness of sins? Grace is indeed forgiveness of sins. Of all? Yes. It is grace wherein He hath abounded toward us exceedingly. It concerns the exceeding riches of His grace. Have we received forgiveness of sins? Yes. Of everything? Also of

that just now? Yes. Also of that long ago, also of what we have forgotten and also of what we have not confessed.

That same grace, however, which we have received from God, also means not only that He has delivered us in the past, but also that He gives us a present and a future. He gives us a place in the church and thereby a function. Paul also received such a function and he says of it that that is the grace he received. Each of us also receives grace from God. That is to say, forgiveness of sins and offences, but also a function now and for the future a reward for the exercise of that function, an inheritance kept for us in heaven. Of those who in His name cast out devils He said: "Depart from me; I never knew you." Perhaps this does not apply to everyone, but nevertheless it stands in the Bible. It also says: "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain." To get round that, people have made it that you must not swear. Swearing is not the worst. The worst is when you use the name of the Lord in connection with things that are not at all of the Lord. That is taking the name of the Lord in vain. You also need not use the name of the Lord as a stop-word or as an expletive; that is also taking it in vain, but that is not what we are talking about. It concerns a far more serious form of taking the name of the Lord in vain. For example: "Thus saith the Lord...", after which someone supposedly begins to prophesy. Of whom the Lord then said: "They use my name, but I have not spoken." That is in the first place taking the name of the Lord in vain.

Back therefore to the Lord and to the Word. Then it is all not so difficult. It is rigorous; it is all or nothing. It is: we come to Him and say: "Lord, here I am." You cannot say to the Lord: "This is all I am and have" and at the same time hold something back. The Bible says you will not get away with that. Think of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5). If someone says you must spend so many per cent of the day or of your time reading the Bible, then that means nothing. Even if you did it all day long. There have been plenty of such people and perhaps still are. People call them spiritual. A better description would be "obsessive neurotics." That is not spiritual. Such people have become unfit for society. They are busy with all sorts of things, but they achieve nothing. They are active, but it produces nothing. There are also people who acknowledge that doing Bible study is very useful, but do not do it themselves. They then say: "But at least we do something." As though doing Bible study means doing nothing! Then works are placed above doctrine. Works give satisfaction. You have been busy and come to the satisfying conclusion that you have already done quite a lot. Perhaps something useful too? Something according to the will of God? You have walked a distance, but was it on the course set before you? You have walked a distance, you have sung Christian songs, but was it the way of Christ? That may not sound kind, but for the people who do not find this kind, the advice is to go to the Lord today and say to Him: "Lord, here I am. Tell me; let me know." Therefore we do not faint. Paul is faithful to his ministry. We do not collapse, because we have this ministry.

2 Corinthians 4:2

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

We do not faint, but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty. Hidden things of dishonesty = shameful coverings. With the emphasis on the adjective shameful, it is thus turned into a noun.

We have renounced the shameful coverings. Where those coverings are, that is shameful. Which coverings? Now do not give an answer sought outside the context. People then say that those are the things we keep covered, that we prefer not to bring into the open, the things we do in secret or stealth. Those you must put away. They then read as though Paul put away those hidden things. Secret sins, that is called. But then you are outside the context. It has already been about a covering over the Bible, over the heart, over the head, over the ears, or however it is called, for at least half a page. It concerns a covering that would be taken away by Christ for the one who comes to Him. The intention was that we should come to the Lord with unveiled face and afterwards reflect His glory (3:18). When Paul two verses later says that we have renounced the shameful coverings, then he is therefore still speaking of that same covering. That is also evident from the following verses.

But we have renounced the shameful coverings. That was already the theme in chapter 2. For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God (2 Corinthians 2:17). We do not mix it, we do not adulterate it. Not we, but others do. That happened in the days of Paul and it still happens today. For lack of Bible knowledge people take refuge in philosophy and that sort of thing.

We have renounced the shameful coverings. Those are coverings of laws and rules, commandments consisting in ordinances, that are laid over the New Testament. In such a way that they screen off the light. Then you think you must do all sorts of things, whereby you no longer understand what is really meant in the Old Testament and thus also not in the New. If we do not come to the Lord unconditionally, then He cannot and will not take away that covering. But Paul says that we have renounced the shameful coverings. The reason why people do not want to go to the Lord unconditionally is that they consciously or unconsciously know that the Lord pulls away the covering and confronts us with the consequences. "Oh yes, do you want to serve Me? Really?" "Yes," said the rich young ruler, and then he went away. "Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." And he went away, for he was very rich.

Must one then give away one's possessions? No idea, but in the course of history many have actually done so. Far more important, however, is the higher application of it, for many are rich not in goods but in culture, in religion, in their religious life. People speak not without reason of the rich Roman life and the rich Jewish life, for religion is generally regarded as riches, as something one possesses. Thus it is spoken of not only by those who have it, but also by those who say they have no need of it. When someone is converted, people say: "He's got religion." Then he gets religion, a splendid possession. But the Lord says: "Art thou rich? Leave that merchandise and follow Me."² But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

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For example, consider Abraham. He came from a great city and was rich in culture. But the Lord said: Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee (Genesis 12:1). We human beings must first weigh things up. After all, if you want to build a tower, you must first count the cost. But when Abraham asks the Lord where he is to go, the Lord tells him he does not need to know: Go unto the land that I will shew thee. Trust Me. When you come to the Lord, it should be with full surrender: "Lord, here I am." Why? If the Lord then asks: "What are you doing here?", what do you say? "To do Thy will, O God." "Take me, break me, fill me, and send me" (hymn). That is quite different from developing your natural abilities. If you tell the Lord that you are good at this or that and ask whether He will please use it, then He does not do so. If you say to Him: "Lord, here I am; I can do nothing, but Thou hast called me. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," then He gives you something. That used to be the common Christian evangelical faith. Where has that gone? Has God changed? No, the hymn book has changed.

We should go to the Lord, and He takes away the veil. We should be conformed to His image. Well then, the Lord Himself bore His cross and despised the shame. He lost everything that He humanly had in this world, but God has highly exalted Him and set Him at His right hand in the highest heavens. We should follow that example. We are followers of Christ. That is classic and orthodox: followers of Christ.² But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Paul says he is a follower of Christ. Therefore he has renounced these shameful coverings. For he does not walk in craftiness, because if you do not want to renounce those coverings, then in the case of Paul, who was expected to preach the word, you must decide on the way whether to preach things that are in the Bible or not, because it may not be wise to do so. It is indeed everywhere in the Bible, but you cannot speak about it every day. Or, it is indeed in the Bible, but it does not fit our present views. Each of us has a responsibility. We should therefore not walk in craftiness, by deciding for ourselves what to use from the Bible and what not. The Bible, the word of God, is a two-edged sharp sword (Hebrews 4:12). It discerns between spirit and soul. It makes distinctions, separates things that we would rather have kept together as a compromise. You cannot go through life toward the Lord or stand in life in that way.

Paul sets himself as an example. Not only here, but in many other places he says the same. He has renounced these shameful coverings and does not walk in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully. He does not carry the word of God for sale = falsify (2 Corinthians 2:17). Mixing with something else, diluting.

Paul does not do that, but by manifestation of the truth he commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

Manifestation = taking away the covering, unveiling.

So it is still about the same thing: a truth that was covered and whose covering is removed. The shameful coverings are therefore not about the sins of man that one tries to keep secret, but about trying to keep biblical truth covered. A great deal of biblical truth lies completely open and is as simple as $1 + 1 = 2$, but precisely about such things there is always debate, so as not to have to accept it. To be able to say that there are also people who think differently. Indeed, there are also people who do not think at all and publish that too.

By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience. It does not say to all men. Manifesting the truth does not make you acceptable to all men. If a few do, that is already a lot. It says: commending ourselves to every man's conscience. At least insofar as they still have a conscience and have not seared it with a hot iron (1 Timothy 4:2). For at a certain point there is no way back.

The truth fits seamlessly with what man by nature and in principle knows. That is called conscience in the Bible. Actually co-knowledge. Calvinists call that innate knowledge of God. That is to say, innate knowledge. It is built into man, just as in a computer. You have to teach it a lot, but there is already something in it, otherwise it does not work. So it is with man too. There is already something in it, and what comes from outside should connect with it. That is the function of conscience. The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly (Proverbs 20:27—soul = neshamah =

conscience), the inward part of man. If you still do not want the truth, then you must screw shut your conscience and become unreceptive to that truth.

Paul says that by manifestation of the truth he not only is a sweet savour of Christ (chapter 2), but also commends himself to every man's conscience. Examine yourself: when you protest so hard against something. Why do you do that? Because it is inconvenient, or is it really because you think it is not biblical? There are many people who try to find arguments against what the Bible itself teaches. That is where all the confusion comes from. That makes the work of a Bible teacher rather hopeless. Why do we not submit to certain things? Because we have biblical arguments for them, or because there is something in us that resists them?

Give up everything for the Lord? Surely the Lord can use my abilities? You have a great CV, or at least a fat bank account, and you take that to the Lord. But you would do better to go to the Lord with nothing. Take what you have and leave it behind and start from the beginning. It is like when you went into the army in the old days. You arrived there. Completely undress, different room, different cupboard, different bed, and different clothes. Nothing more of your own. From that moment you were under military discipline. Now you are a soldier of the Lord Jesus. Nothing more of your own and under His discipline.

By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Just as once Moses in the sight of God took the veil from his face. In the sight of God, but also in the consciousness of His presence.

You might say that it may be so that with Paul the veil is gone, but yet at times it seems as though a veil lies over it. Paul says about that...

2 Corinthians 4:3

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Our gospel = the gospel as we preach it. Without going into whether there may also be other gospels—though in Galatians 1 it says there is no other gospel. Here, however, it is not about the nature of the gospel, but about the nature of gospel preaching.

But if our gospel be hid. This at least suggests that there is a possibility that the gospel can indeed be hidden. That, however, does not lie with Paul, but with the fact that sometimes a veil lies over the hearts of the hearers, as over Israel, or the Jews from the preceding chapter. That is also stated. That veil lies over those who are lost. On them applies the following verse.

2 Corinthians 4:4

In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

In whom = in those who are lost.

The gospel that Paul preaches is the preaching of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

It is the god of this world who blinds the minds. It is therefore also the god of this world who places a veil over the gospel and keeps that veil in place. That therefore does not lie with the preaching or the preacher, but with the hearer in question.

This thought fits nicely with the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, in which the sower scatters that seed everywhere, but proportionately it rarely falls into good ground and

bears fruit. That does not lie with the sower, but with where that seed lands. That is in fact also said here, but in different words.

The meaning of “lost” has taken on a life of its own in Christendom. Generally there are only two possibilities: you are saved or you are lost or are perishing. Yet those expressions are not so black-and-white. The question is: saved for what? The same therefore applies to “lost.” What then is lost? That is therefore a relative concept.

This expression is indeed used in the Bible for those who die as unbelievers. They are deemed lost. Nevertheless, the expression is also used for believers who have received eternal life. If you hold to the absolute meaning of the expression, you naturally arrive at the doctrine of the so-called falling away of the saints, which means that someone may indeed be saved, but can yet again be lost. The Bible speaks of that, of believers, even of brethren, who perish. And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? (1 Corinthians 8:11). It is not the intention that we contribute to someone perishing. That does not mean, however, that someone can lose eternal life. After all, eternal life is eternal life because you cannot lose it. It cannot be shortened, and you therefore cannot lose it either. If that were possible, then our earthly life might as well be called eternal life, for you can apparently lose that too.

“Perish” is in itself a very good translation. If you perish, what are you lost? The going, the way therefore, the route. You do go, but you do not arrive where you ought to be.

Popularly said, you have lost the way.

Apollymi = perish. It is also translated “destruction.” That is it too, for if you arrive at the wrong place, you lose everything. That is what it comes down to, but not necessarily life. Moreover, the intention is not only that a man should be born again, born of the Spirit, receive the Spirit, receive new life, but also that that life should be lived. The intention is also not that the seed should sprout, but that the seed should bear fruit. If it does sprout but bears no fruit, then it has lost the way. It does go somewhere, but does not arrive where it ought to be. Thus believers can also perish. In evangelical jargon they are indeed saved, but yet perish. They themselves are saved, but nothing remains of their life—namely no fruit. Their works will be cast into the fire, judged. Wood, hay, and stubble burn, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. His ego, who he is, he does not lose, but his practical life he does.

That is what this is about.

The god of this world hath blinded the minds—the senses. That is evidently figurative. They do hear, but do not understand; they do see, but do not perceive. Thus the covering of the Jews is described. They know what they hear and see but do not know how to interpret it. Our senses, with which we are supposed to perceive, are only part of the whole. They do perceive, but then it still has to be interpreted. The brain does that.

Perhaps you know the phenomenon that the ear doctor says there is nothing wrong with the ears, but someone is still stone deaf? Then it is psychosomatic. But whatever it is called, it happens. Lazy eyes also arise. The brain does not use what the eye perceives, and afterwards the activity of the eye disappears too. That is not called blind, but lazy. People do nothing with it. If it is discovered early enough, the good eye is patched, so that you are forced to use the lazy eye anyway. That does not happen on command, but must be practised. The senses must be exercised. If you do not do that, they disappear and no longer do what they should do.

People can sometimes see or hear something they would have been better not to see or hear, after which they can become blind or deaf through the impact. That happened a

lot with soldiers in the First World War. Since then those phenomena have also been studied.

A person can see, a person can hear, a person may be intelligent, but whether he can also appropriate what he learns is still the question. If that does not happen, says the apostle, then there is a covering. The things do not really penetrate. The god of this world keeps that out. If you seek God outside the Bible, then you end up with the god of this world anyway, with the prince of this world, with the devil. If you are a child of God, a born-again person, and you seek God outside the Bible, in experience, then you end up with the devil. You only think he is your God. That is in practice the case too, but then “your god” with a small letter. The god they have found they then call Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. They have, however, the wrong one. They do not arrive at the Christ, but at the antichrist.

Within not too long a time that will happen to the whole world population. It has always happened. The Reformers were of the opinion that all Roman Catholics served the antichrist, and in fact they were right. The pope was prince in this world, also politically. How does that god do it, blinding the minds? Is that a trick, something magical, a kind of sorcery? Sometimes yes, but in general it concerns believers who attach more importance to the things of the world, to the norms and values of the world. They take those with them into their own Christianity and are thereby blinded, for they are no longer open to what the Word says. If they use the Bible at all, they must fit it into the worldly system that they do not want to let go of. That really will not work. It is not a matter of symbiosis, on the one hand the old man and on the other the new man and sliding them into each other to make something new. It is either the one or the other. Those things stand apart from each other and cannot be united. The god of this world uses the rudiments of this world as a covering for the truth.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ:

Theft!

When someone goes to study for the ministry, he begins with philosophy. That is at the top of the list. Here too, but then in the list of things you should not do. These things do not lead to Christ.⁹ For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

If you want to find those treasures of wisdom and knowledge and thus simply the truth, then you must be with Christ. The purpose of preaching is therefore to lead you to Christ. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ. You must therefore be with Him. Who of God is made unto us wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30), in contrast to the wisdom of the world that is brought to nought.

Back to 2 Corinthians 4.3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Those who do not run the race, who go another way and have therefore lost the way.⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. The minds = in practice the understanding.

The term “unbelievers” we have also absolutized. Someone is a believer or he is not. In practice it does not work that way. In practice people believe one thing and not another. It is always relative. What do they believe then? Someone may indeed be a believer (it is not about being religious), but where does he set his trust? It is therefore a relative concept.

There are therefore also unbelieving believers. That is what this is about. It is not questioned that these Corinthians are believers, born again, for in 1 Corinthians 1:2 Paul calls them saints. That is not the point, but they are relatively unbelieving, because they do not want to accept what Paul teaches. Namely that we are delivered from this present evil age, from this world and thereby naturally from the god of this world, and do not live under the rudiments of this world, but under the principles of the New Covenant. If one rejects that, then one is called unbelieving. At any rate here.

We can speak about certain matters that we think are biblical, whereby one can say that he believes this or that and the other does not. We can differ about that. That can happen. Indeed, it does happen, but that is not without obligation. Among ourselves that is rather non-committal, but toward the Lord it is not. You can indeed say to another that you do not believe certain things or do not see them that way, but say that to the Lord. For we are taught by the Lord and shall also give account to Him. You cannot say to the Lord: "Yes, You say that now, but I do not see it that way." That is no argument. Therefore we are always confronted with that word of God and in the presence of God. We should take that to heart and compare Scripture with Scripture. Then it may be that we do not see certain biblical matters that are indeed true. That is called: not yet seeing. Perhaps as long as we are here we will never see them, simply because it does not penetrate to us, we cannot understand it, or for whatever reason.

Some find this no argument, because we do after all receive that Spirit of wisdom and knowledge of Him, to understand the things. Moreover, it says in the Bible that if any lack wisdom, he should ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not (James 1:5). Indeed, that stands in the Bible, but now you come to that difficult point: namely that nowhere in the Bible does it say that God makes us sufficient to sit in a corner on our own with a Bible and read and leaf through it long enough until we understand something of it. Nowhere does it say that that is how it works. It does say that the word of God is preached and that those to whom it is preached have the responsibility to search whether these things are so, as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11). Most of us do not begin at the beginning, but we hear the word; someone tells it to us. It is our responsibility to accept that. Besides that, we should check whether these things are indeed the word of God, insofar as we can. Insofar as we cannot, we ask the Lord to make it clear to us.

This is a complicated way of saying that God has given to the church some to be teachers. The Lord did that because He does not make us sufficient to study the Bible all by ourselves and so come to the knowledge of the truth. He has made us members of a church in which functions are distributed. We should therefore let ourselves be taught. Others say that Bible teachers tell people all sorts of things and they take it for sweet cake. If you ask those same people to prove it from the Bible, they cannot. For sweet cake? The intention is that a Bible teacher should thoroughly argue what he says and give Scripture references showing that what is said is biblically accountable. That others cannot then retell it from the Bible is because not everyone has received the gift of teacher. At school you also learn things on the authority of someone who is also called a teacher. That is it. Afterwards as a pupil you do not need to retell his story, with arguments and all that sort of thing; you just need to know it. You do not need to ask an average electrician how it all works and how it is technically put together, why it is so and why it cannot be otherwise. That man is not trained for that and does not have the

qualities for it. He is a craftsman and knows how to handle it, how to make it work, and how not to make a mess, but he does not therefore need to explain it.

Where do such objections come from? Because people no longer accept human authority in any form. That is where the fixed idea comes from that if you just sit in a corner with the Bible and study and leaf through it long enough, it will all come right. That does not come right, for that was not the intention at all. That is not how the Lord does it. Whether you like it or not, this is biblical. You can indeed say that as a Bible teacher you are then speaking in your own street, and that may be so, but who will do it then? That is after all the responsibility a Bible teacher has received! This is what the Bible says about it, and you must therefore hold to that as a teacher.³ But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

Those who do not run the course, who go another way and have therefore lost the way.⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. So it says that very many believers are not receptive because they have other interests. They have interests in this world, of which Satan is the god, the god of this age. Therefore they are shut tight to the word of God. Their study of the Bible does not help with that.

There are people who shut themselves in their office, with even a library attached, who develop all sorts of ideas. When they come out of their office they begin to spout all those ideas. That is not how it works and never has worked. God reveals Himself in the midst of believers, in the fellowship of believers, where believers communicate with one another. There the whole of that church begins to function. The church does not function 100% independently in one person. All those hermits who were busy with the Bible every day never produced anything sensible. It has always been the communion of saints that accomplished something. That is how the Lord works. As a Bible teacher you must learn how the Lord works. We should also learn that as human beings we must simply submit to God's word and say to Him: "Lord, here I am." That is how it works. We learn by first accepting what is told us. Afterwards we also learn that things are told us that afterwards prove not to be biblical. It is not a matter of you searching it all out yourself. That is not how the Lord works and never has been.

The most important thing is that we should not try to fit the Bible into the rudiments of this age, of the god of this age. That only produces blindness. That is the only real explanation for the phenomenon that even in our days there are people who are busy day in day out with studying the Bible, or what they understand by that, but in whom the light never dawns. They never come to the knowledge of the truth. They are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Why? Because they either want to fit the matter into their own worldly views, or they have a double agenda and want to achieve something with it. A great deal of biblical truth is rejected by people who only want to accept it if they think they are able to pass it on. They reject it because they think: "Yes, but I cannot go and tell people that. I do not understand it myself and therefore I cannot tell people either." Because he does not understand it, he rejects it. He wants to appropriate it, master it, and then be able to go out with it.

The average minister wanted to become a minister. He begins studying early: Greek, Latin, sometimes Hebrew, and all sorts of other subjects. Why do they study that? Not that the Bible really comes into it, but perhaps it does. Why do they do it? To learn a trade, to earn a living. We think that quite normal, for that is how it works, isn't it? Yes, in

the world, but not with the Lord. God goes in a completely different way. It is not to become something, but to come to know the truth, to have a share in the Lord Jesus Christ. The possibility exists that after a time He gives you a gift or ministry to pass on something. That, however, must not be the norm for whether you accept certain biblical truth or not. It all comes down to whether you are willing to serve the Lord, to come to Him, and submit yourself to Him. If the Corinthians do not want that, then it is not possible for Paul to shine upon them in any way with the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ Jesus, who is the image of God. They were not open to it. All preaching and teaching is wasted on them. Paul makes no progress.

What personally threatens us is the ambition to be something here, whereas the ambition should precisely be to be nothing here. As John already sang of the Lord: "To be nothing, wholly nothing, only sitting at His feet." That is an older version of the hymn "At the feet of my Saviour." That is how it should be. We who are nothing should be used by the Lord. We who are empty earthen vessels should let ourselves be filled with that treasure of glory, of knowledge. As long as we keep those vessels filled with something else—because we have other interests, or because we do not want to give up certain things of our own ideals and ambitions—then there is no room for that treasure of glory and knowledge. Then they remain earthen vessels filled with wood, hay, and stubble. It is therefore a serious message to believers. The Lord wants to use us; He wants to fill us. For that you must indeed be empty and be on the way with the Lord, without knowing where you will arrive, under the motto: "If I perish, I perish." That will not so quickly be the case here in the West, but the point is that you do not know where it will take you. Nor do we need to know that. We live day by day from the hand of the Lord. If He wants to use us, then He uses us. If He gives us a ministry, then that becomes our responsibility. Afterwards it is always not only in the service of the Lord, but also in the service of the church.⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Some are not illumined by the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ. The reason for that is stated in the preceding verses: namely that there is a veil over their minds, over their heart, or over the Bible, so that that light does not reach them. Thereby they have lost the way (perished). They may indeed be born again, but they are not willing to believe all that the prophets have spoken. That is what the Lord Jesus said on the first Easter day to the Emmaus disciples. But if you think that the Lord gives you so much wisdom that you could study the Bible independently, alone, without any further information, and come to know the whole truth, then that will end in disappointment—for that is not how the Lord does it. At any rate that is not normal. The norm is that we are part of the church, in which we are mutually dependent on the other members of that church, just as we are in turn responsible for other members of the church. He would do His work within the church. Not merely in each believer individually.¹

Corinthians 12 makes it clear enough that we need one another. God gives different gifts and responsibilities within the church. That indeed means that we should also let ourselves be taught. That applies at any rate to most of us and actually to all of us. You should therefore not cherish thoughts higher than what befits you, as though you must be able to find it all yourself anyway. That is not how it works. He would lead us into all truth, and He also uses others for that. It appears that even someone like Peter had to be led by Paul. Paul was sent home to redo his homework, but on the other hand he was

under the mentorship of Barnabas. It did not all come of itself.⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

The light, the gospel, the glory = all light.

It concerns the gospel of the glory of Christ. That is therefore the glad tidings concerning the glorified Christ. That is therefore also the message that has long been expected.

After all, gospel means: the expected message. It need not necessarily be glad tidings, though in most cases it is, even if it is not always experienced as glad. It is that which was to be expected. Hence the gospel is the message of the New Covenant, which indeed was to be expected. Jeremiah already spoke of it, about 600 BC, also under that name: a New Covenant (see Jeremiah 31), but even since at any rate Abraham. It is a New Covenant and the message of a glorified Christ. That is to say, not a suffering Christ, not a suffering Servant of the LORD, but a glorified Christ.

Isaiah said that he saw the LORD on a high and exalted throne (Isaiah 6:1). John adds to that: "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him" (John 12:41).

He saw in advance the glorified Christ. We therefore encounter Him often in the prophecies. Certainly in the Psalms. Even all the psalms of suffering end with a glorified Christ, to whom is given all power in heaven and on earth, to whom all things are subjected, and so on. It is therefore rightly the gospel of the glory of Christ. It is added that this is in fact the glory of God: who is the image of God.

Christ is the image of God. Note well: since the first Easter day, since His resurrection. Before that He was not only not glorified, but moreover not the Christ. The Christ, the Anointed One, is by definition the Glorified One.

That He is the image of God is also stated later in verse 6. You can place verses 4 and 6 alongside each other.⁴ In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He hath shined in our hearts (in the hearts of believers), to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. That last phrase runs exactly the opposite way from the end of verse 4, for verse 4 ends with Christ who is the image of God, while verse 6 ends with the glory of God in the face (in the appearance) of Jesus Christ.

We are to see the glory of God where Jesus Christ appears (it does not matter whether this is literal or figurative; both are true). Neither literally nor figuratively should we make an image of God. There is a good reason for that, for God Himself makes us such an Image. That is to say, He presents us with such an Image. Not only does He make Himself known to us in general, but in particular He reveals Himself in the form and appearance (literally and figuratively) of the Messiah. For He is the image of God. We even know Him under the name Jesus: Jesus Christ, who is the image of God. He has been that since His resurrection from the dead. That can hardly be otherwise, for before that He was not glorified. When He was still on earth He had no form nor comeliness. When He was still on earth He was not even a priest, let alone High Priest. When He was not yet on earth, going still further back, He was not yet Jesus. That He became only at His birth in Bethlehem. In other words, He has been the glorified Christ only since His resurrection from the dead.

In John 2:11 it says that the Lord did a sign at the wedding in Cana. It says that thereby He manifested His glory. That, however, is a picture, a foreshadowing of His future glory. Water would one day be turned into wine, whereby it must be clear to the spiritual man that water is a picture of the word of God. That word of God would prove to be life, for wine is a picture of life: "This is my blood of the new testament." In short, the word of God would bring new life. At the dawning of the New Covenant the Old would be fulfilled or come to fulfilment, and then water becomes wine. The Lord Jesus anticipates that in the night He was betrayed, at the institution of the Holy Supper.

This principle of signs the Lord Jesus did in Cana and manifested His glory. He did not yet have glory then, but it was a sign of His future glory.

Statements about Christ who is the image of God are called in systematic theology "proper theology," or more specifically "Christology." Who is Christ? Then He is the image of God. People mean it actually within the traditional doctrine of the Trinity, in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinguished. The Son is then the image of God. People mean that He was, is, and always will be that. Thus even the expression "eternal Son of God" is used. People mean that term expressly mirrored. That is to say, with retrospective force. That term is never used in connection with the future, that He will always remain so, but when people speak of the eternal Son, they mean that He always was so. The point is that He was precisely not that. That He became only in His resurrection. There too He became the image of God. The Scripture passages that may be quoted in connection with this subject are texts from the New Testament, which however all apply to or are connected with the resurrection of Christ and its result.

In our days we have to do with the most common stream in Protestantism, in which people do not or hardly believe that the Lord Jesus actually rose from the dead. The general trend is therefore that people do not believe in His resurrection. There are still a few "heavy groups" in which people do hold to that, but within the PKN people do not believe it. They use the term, but do not believe it. He did rise from the dead, but not literally. He will always live on in our thoughts.

Those who do believe it think it was just a historical event, while the meaning completely escapes them. According to the people who do not believe it, it makes no difference at all whether it literally happened or not. Thus people have lost the content of the whole Bible. A huge thick veil lies over it.

From the Bible we learn that there would one day be an end to the Old Covenant. That Covenant that no one could bear. By the coming of the Messiah a New Covenant would dawn, whose characteristics would be grace and peace, but also righteousness. Moreover, it would be for ever, connected not only with a New Covenant but also with a new creation, with new heavens and a new earth. Resurrection from the dead. The new that would come forth from the old.

But if you reason from the idea that the Old and New Covenants in reality make no difference and are one and the same thing that you can mix together, so that you can no longer see the difference (the Bible calls that in Hebrews 2 slipping), what are you to do with the resurrection of Christ, which after all means the end of the Old Covenant and the dawning of the New Covenant? Nothing, for then it has no meaning at all.

The point, however, is that Jesus in His resurrection became Christ and Lord and thereby the image of God and Messiah. That is at any rate how Peter said it in his first public gospel preaching in Acts 2. That happened only in His resurrection. On that

occasion He was also highly exalted and received a name above every name. Since then He has also been seated at the right hand of God.

All those expressions no one invented out of thin air, for they all come from the Old Testament, in particular from the Psalms:

- All things are put under His feet (Psalm 8);
- All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Psalm 8);
- He is seated at the right hand of God (Psalm 110);

They are all statements from the Old Testament, which are quoted in the New and applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, including the expression: who is the image of God. That expression you also find besides here in 2 Corinthians 4:4 in Colossians 1:15.

Colossians 1:15

Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:

16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

God cannot be seen. He does of course exist and also does one thing and another, but God is invisible. Insofar as He can be seen (which can also be in a figurative sense), we see the image of God, namely Christ, the Son of His love (v. 13).

He is moreover the firstborn of every creature. The birthright over the whole creation comes to Him. He is the Highest in whatever hierarchy. That is the same as that all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth. The firstborn is for God and should serve God and has power and exercises power.

He is the firstborn from the dead. He is thereby set apart from the rest of the dead. He is not only the firstborn from the Father, but also from men. For He is the firstborn of every creature, the firstborn of all who have ever lived, and apart from that He was also the firstborn of Mary. Thereby He was the firstborn from this world; otherwise He could not even stand at its head. That is precisely the meaning of that term.

He is the image of God.

Hebrews 1:1

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;

Note that "Son" is also another word for firstborn. Not always, but the firstborn is by definition the son. Indeed, the firstborn is the appointed son, who has a share in the sonship = appointment to the birthright.

Esau was indeed a son of Isaac, but was not appointed as son. That was Jacob, though he was younger than Esau. Reuben, Simeon, and Levi were sons of Jacob, but Ephraim was appointed as son, from which it follows that the line of that inheritance right ran through Joseph. For Ephraim was the son of Joseph and thereby the grandson of Jacob. Jacob laid his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh and blessed Joseph. He gave the birthright to Ephraim and to a lesser degree also to Manasseh, but later you read that the birthright was Joseph's (1 Chronicles 5:1).

God has appointed the Son heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds;

Hebrews 1:3

Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

He upholds all things by the word of His power. That sounds very abstract, but it means that He gives expression to the word of God. The power of God comes primarily to expression in that He speaks and thereby also in what He does, for He speaks and it is. Insofar as word and deed are the same, that is only so with God. He speaks and it is. All that God does comes forth from His speaking. Word is abstract, but then takes form and is as it were also projected. You must be a little spiritual to understand these things. We have learned too little to think figuratively, to think along different lines. We have become materialistic, superficial. We also live in a superficial materialistic culture, insofar as you can still speak of a culture.

In any case, Christ is the express image of God's person. How should you imagine God? You should not imagine God, for God presents Himself, and He is called the Lord Jesus Christ. That is more or less a chronological term: Jehovah (from the past), Jehoshua (in His incarnation), Messiah (since His resurrection).

Philippians 2:6

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

In other words, He who was in the form of God and equal with God thought it not robbery to empty Himself. He was in the form of God and thought it not robbery to empty Himself. Whatever else you make of it, nonsense arises. For why should you think it robbery to be equal with God? He was precisely equal with God and did not regard it as theft to lay it aside.

He was equal with God, not merely for a short time, for "equal" here is synonymous with "like."

He took the form of a servant and was made like men. He was in the form of God, or equal with God, and He became in the form of a servant, namely like men, from which it automatically follows that man is by definition a servant. If man wants any satisfaction in his practical life, then that can only be if he is serviceable, for man is a servant, it says. Most people are unhappy because they have not learned to serve but to rule. We should strive for the higher. Yet that does not make you happy. You should be serviceable, as the Lord Himself in His earthly life—for that is what this is about. He humbled Himself, even to the death of the cross. Therefore God also highly exalted Him (v. 9). The way to glory goes through humiliation. You would be exalted through service. That is what the Lord Jesus also says to His disciples: "He that is least shall be greatest. As long as you strive to be greatest and as long as you strive to sit on my right hand and on my left" (the sons of Zebedee), it will not come right. The high would be abased and the abased exalted. Think of Joseph. His way to exaltation ran through humiliation. We are indeed speaking of Easter, of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, who was extremely humbled to death, even the death of the cross, but God has exalted Him. That was in accordance with His plan, moreover in accordance with His word. Christ is the

Glorified One. Insofar as we come to Him, to that extent He will also illumine us. Then we shall have a share in His glory and shall reflect His glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). Insofar as He is the radiance of God's glory, that means that where Jesus dwells in our hearts, there God shines in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God. We then have a share in that glory. So if you do not believe in the literal resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it will always remain dark.

Back to 2 Corinthians 4.

2 Corinthians 4:5

For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

The sentence begins with "for" and is therefore an explanation of verse 4. The same applies to the following verse, which is a comment on either verse 5 or verse 4, but in practice obviously on both.

We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus our Lord, with regard to the gospel of the glory of Christ—for the glory of Christ is the subject of the gospel. Christ, namely, who is the image of God, as from His resurrection from the dead and thereby as from the dawning of the New Covenant, under which we are expected to live and under which the veil is definitively or is to be taken away.

We do not preach something we have thought up ourselves, not even something we ourselves believe. We do not try merely to spread our own convictions. That would be subjective and subject to change. We do not preach a doctrine, but Someone. Of course there is indeed a doctrine concerning Christ. The Bible teaches about Christ, and we know Him only from the Bible and from what the Bible teaches about Him. So to say that we have no doctrine is rather too sweeping. Nevertheless, we preach Someone, a Person. We preach the Person of the Godhead. Person is someone's outward aspect. There is only one Person of the Godhead, only one expressed image of God's essence, the Lord Jesus Christ. Him we preach, and thereby we naturally preach that God of the Bible. That God, however, takes form in the Person and work of our Saviour. We preach Christ, who is Jesus, and He is indeed the Lord. The title is here read retrospectively, backwards. He is the Christ; before that He was Jesus, and before that He was Jehovah. He is Christ, and Christ is Jesus, and Jesus is the Lord. Jesus was not the Lord, for He was the Servant, the opposite of Lord and the opposite of Master.

We always have a small problem with the word "Lord" in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in the New, because "Lord" can be the translation of two different Hebrew words: namely the name Jehovah, the proper name of the Godhead (when the Godhead appears, He bears the name Jehovah), but it is also the translation of the Hebrew Adonai. We know that word in the shortened form: don, lord. "Ai" at the end means: my Lord; the One whom I serve.

It is said, by the way, that the vowel points under the name Jehovah are taken from the vowels of Adonai. Jehovah is written, but we Jews may not pronounce it, so we put the vowels of Adonai underneath, so that you pronounce Adonai when you come across the word Jehovah. In that way the name Jehovah has been rather systematically obscured. Not only in pronunciation, but even in the written texts. There are very many Scripture passages in which the name Jehovah has been replaced by the Hebrew word Adonai.

You can no longer see that, but you must know it. Is that important? The point is that you know it is so.

When you read “Lord” in the New Testament, you never quite know whether you should take it as Jehovah, the name of the Godhead, or as Adonai, as the One whom we serve. When it says: “But ye serve the Lord Christ,” it seems you should take “Lord” as Adonai: “Ye serve your Master, and that is Christ.” In practice He is Jehovah; so much difference it does not make after all.

Nevertheless, it appears here to concern Adonai. We serve Christ Jesus the Lord, Adonai, the One whom we serve. That this is so is evident from what follows: For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. Your servants, servants of the church, but in the first place servants of Christ, who is the Head of the church. The members of the body serve the head in the first place, and in practice they serve one another. They are hand and foot to one another, as it says in 1 Corinthians 12.

Paul and his companions are in the first place servants. They are not rulers, but serviceable—not to a doctrine, but to Someone. People often deal far too lightly with the Bible, even with what is called Bible study, because they evidently do not realise that they are not merely dealing with letters and a doctrine that they try in some way to discover, interpret, or compile, but that they are dealing with Someone, with God Himself. If that is too abstract, you are dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ, most personally. Everything we learn, study, and say about Him we shall in the future have to give account of to Him most personally. It is not merely a doctrine compiled by someone, any more than it is a collection of separate books conveniently bound together in one volume, but we are dealing with the word of God, with the word of a living God. When we study that word, He stands as it were beside us. The same applies when we discuss it with one another. That does not go around Him. You cannot do it non-committally. If you want to remain free, then leave the Bible closed. Free in the sense that you want to go your own way completely. The other way round is probably even more important. If we are not willing to submit to the Scripture, then it remains closed too. You can then do with it what you like. You can try as hard as you want, but it will not help you. Then it simply remains covered. Submission is the first condition for studying the Bible. It is pointless if you do not beforehand submit to it and thereby to Him. That is decisive for whether the Lord opens that word to us.

The Lord said to the Emmaus disciples: O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken (Luke 24:25). That does not alter the fact that it then says He opened the Scriptures to them, opened their hearts, and opened their eyes. He does that. We should in the first place be willing to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Afterwards He shows us what the prophets have spoken. That is the order. We do not first learn what the prophets have spoken and then perhaps believe it, but we believe it beforehand, while we do not yet know it. Afterwards He makes it known to us. That is the intention.

What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, but God has revealed to us by His Spirit. He Himself is the One who has placed a veil over it, and He Himself is also the One who takes away that veil. Our striving to remove that veil leads absolutely to nothing. That is why there is so much confusion and misunderstanding about the Bible. That is why people also have the idea that you can go in all directions with the Bible, that the Bible can be interpreted in many ways. As long as that veil lies over it, it seems so, but as soon

as that veil is removed, that can no longer be. That is what this is about.⁵ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. We are servants of the church for Jesus' sake. We serve Christ Jesus the Lord, and because that is so, we therefore also serve the church. That is the order. We should therefore not choose to serve the church, but to serve the Lord. It is not about the church; it is about Christ. He gives us a place within the church.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

That is what God does: speak.

In Ephesians 5:13 it says: All things that are reposed are made manifest by the light. So the word of God, which indeed makes manifest, is light. Christ too is Light. For He takes away the veil. He is Himself expected to be Light. God commanded that light should shine out of darkness. If He says that, then light is already shining out of darkness there.

That God is the One who hath shined in our hearts. Paul describes his own situation and that of his fellow-workers. God has shone in their hearts, in contrast to those who do not want to hear it. With Paul it is different, for they have renounced the shameful coverings. God has shone in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. That glory of God is evidently found in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ (person is another word for face, the outward aspect). Not only in His Person, but also in His work, for the Person is not static but active.

It is God who shines in our hearts. As said, all our striving to penetrate the Bible comes to nothing if God Himself does not shine in our hearts. That does not mean we should not make effort for it, for we should indeed do so, but He uses that and then leads us into all truth. The Lord said: Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (John 5:39). He immediately added, however: And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life (John 5:40).

Search the Scriptures. Then you must first come to the One of whom those Scriptures speak. Then you will indeed find. Seek and ye shall find. It cannot all be so difficult, because it is the Lord who would lead us in it.

The expression that God commanded light to shine out of darkness is rather illustrative, for you immediately learn that in Genesis 1:3 it is already speaking of the Messiah, of the glory of Christ. The expression "Let there be light" therefore has a far broader application than only that on the first day in the series of seven in Genesis. You also learn from it that everything begins with light. If there is no light, there is nothing at all. Hence light is life.

God speaks. If you ask what He speaks about, He says: "Let there be light." That is the first thing that happens. If you listen to His word, then light appears there; then hidden things are revealed to us, then we come to know the unknowable God. When that light shines, the image of Christ is projected there; then we see Him. We then do not see the man of Nazareth in humiliation here on earth; we do not see a corpus on a crucifix, not merely a body on a cross, but we see a living Christ, the Lamb standing as slain. We know a glorified Christ, who has been highly exalted by God, who is seated at His right

hand, and who has been given to the church as Head. That is Resh and almost Reshiet = the First and thereby also the Firstborn.

There is yet another expression used in that connection, but a whole book is devoted to it: He has become High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. That is what the epistle to the Hebrews is about, in which various things are drawn from Old Testament symbolism.

You can say plainly that Christ is seated at the right hand of God, but on closer inspection that is not plain language but idiom. It means that He has been placed in an equal position with God Himself, but because He has been placed there by God Himself, He remains subject to God. Just as someone at your right hand is also subject to you.

God has highly exalted Him. In metres? How is that plain language? It always remains rather difficult. You must want to understand the things. That is why the comparison with the Old Testament high priesthood in the epistle to the Hebrews is so wonderful. There all sorts of things from the Old Testament are set before us, and it is added that this is what it means. If you were not so superficial, you would have seen through it much earlier. Then you would have understood long ago that Aaron, the first high priest, is a picture of the High Priest who was to come. That he would be succeeded. And just as Aaron would be succeeded by Eleazar, so the whole Aaronic priesthood would be completely succeeded by another priesthood, in which that High Priest might bear the name Eleazar, Lazarus (the Greek form of Eleazar). That is no longer superficial, but seeing through it, searching underneath. There is something behind those things.

It is hard to understand what people have against it, for with most language use there is something behind it. And if there is not something behind it, then it is not worth the effort. Literature is literature not only because it is so beautifully formulated, but because it is ambiguous. Because one thing is told while it is really about another. There is something behind it. Hence literature at school must be explained: "What did the author really mean?" That is literature with people, but this is the word of God. There is more behind it, and that is illustrated to us.

Hebrews says that Christ has become High Priest after the power of an endless life. He became that through His resurrection from the dead. When He was on earth He was no priest. He could not even be one, because He was from the wrong tribe. He therefore became that only in His resurrection. His crucifixion was also not a priestly work, let alone a priestly sacrifice, for He was no priest. Moreover, it says that it was not the intention at all that priests should die. No, they were hindered by death from continuing, but the intention was that a priest should be priest for ever. Christ is High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Aaron died and was succeeded by his son Eleazar, Lazarus. In the New Testament you come across two persons named Lazarus. Both died, and with both the question was whether they would rise again and when. One Lazarus is the one opposite the rich man. The rich man thought Lazarus should rise from the dead to bring his friends the gospel. Abraham answered that even if someone rose from the dead, they would not believe him.

The other Lazarus was the brother of the sisters Mary and Martha from Bethany. He dies, and there is a whole discussion about whether he will rise again and when. Martha thought it would be at the last day. The Lord Jesus had a different thought about that. In any case, we know how it ended.

John 11:43

And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.
44 And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes:
and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him,
and let him go.

If you read slowly, it goes twice over the same thing. First the bonds of death were broken; afterwards he was loosed from these cloths. You might not notice it, but if you then come to John 20, where Peter and John both run to the tomb and John arrives first at the tomb, it says:

John 20:5

And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

Both with Lazarus and with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus there is mention of cloths and a napkin that are as it were put away. Surely it cannot be too difficult to find something here of a veil that has been taken away. Further there is mention of unpacking, of loosing. They were wrapped in cloths. The Lord Jesus even at His birth. In natural human terms those were of course not the same cloths, but if you have a little spiritual insight, they were. He was born and wrapped in cloths; here He is born again and leaves the cloths behind Him. The outward form is left behind, the body. His body was indeed changed, but thereby that old body was no more. It is indeed the same body, but yet not. It is changed.

Those cloths are there, and the napkin is also found there. That is the cloth over the face. That cloth is rolled up in a special place. On the one hand the veil is taken away, and on the other hand that cloth is rolled up into what we call a turban. That is the priestly head-dress. That is all seen.

Lazarus himself is of course a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. The death and resurrection of Lazarus are a picture of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The expression "Behold how he loved him" of the Lord Jesus concerning Lazarus is thereby immediately explained. The Lord Jesus knew full well what it was about, and He knew that one day it would be said to him: "Lazarus, come forth!"

Peter said: "But God hath raised him up!" And God has appointed Him High Priest of the New Covenant. God has loosed Him, not only from the bonds of death, but thereby also naturally from the bonds of the law and thereby also from the Old Testament priesthood. That does not mean that the Lord Jesus was a priest under the Old Testament, but that the Old Testament was ministered by the ministers of the Old Covenant. Those were the priests. Those cloths are a picture of that priesthood, and it is loosed. The Lord said in Matthew 16:19 to Peter: And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Peter would be the one who would solemnly declare that the Old Covenant was loosed and that the New Covenant was binding. You find that here: the cloths in one place and the napkin rolled up in another place. Loosed from the law of the Old Covenant, and on the other hand a beginning of the High Priesthood of the New Covenant of the Lord Jesus Christ after the

order of Melchizedek. That lies behind those things. In the epistle to the Hebrews much more is told us about those things by means of what were the responsibilities of the high priest under the Old Covenant. Those are a picture of the responsibilities of the High Priest of the New Covenant.

The highest responsibility of the high priest was to teach the word of God. Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant, as Light of God, leads us into all truth. He does not do that by debating, or when we try terribly hard, but when we first come to Him and acknowledge Him as the High Priest, as Head, not only of the church but also of us personally.

And what was it again with Melchizedek, after whose order the Lord Jesus had become High Priest? We actually know nothing about him and thereby everything. We know that after the battle he took care of the catering. After the slaughter of the kings there appeared someone who passed for the mightiest king of all, Melchizedek. He no longer took part in the battle, for that was over. He brought forth bread and wine. It will not be too difficult to recognise in that the Lord Jesus in His present position, as the Lord Himself pictured it in the night He was betrayed, when He took the bread and distributed it and took the wine and distributed it. He said thereby: "This is my blood of the new testament." By His death and resurrection the Old Covenant would be ended and the New dawn. Since then one would walk in that excelling glory of the New Covenant and thus also in its excelling light. Insofar as we are in darkness, that is because we do not report to the Lord and do not want to be taught by Him. The Lord Himself promised to do that. The only thing asked of us is to knock at His door and say: "Lord, go ahead. Give me that light, give me that food, give me that bread, that wine." You do not even need to ask; you can simply take it, which is another word for believe. Behind the bread and wine naturally lies the word, by which the Lord does all His work. If God does a work in us, that happens because the word of Christ dwells in us richly. It is not more difficult than that. From us is expected that we should be sincere toward the Lord, and then accept everything He hands us, with thanksgiving. Bread and wine are among other things a picture of that. They naturally stand for everything that pertains to life and godliness. He hands it to us. It is not for us to dig it up, fetch it from heaven, or from the realm of the dead; we need only sit down at His table, naturally in fellowship with one another. Where we acknowledge and seek that fellowship, there He is in our midst, and in the midst of that fellowship He does His work. Reason enough to thank Him for it.⁶ For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

God gives knowledge. He shines in our hearts so that we should thereby understand, comprehend, and thereby also come to fellowship with Him. If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another (1 John 1:7). Not only with one another, but also with the Lord Jesus Himself and His Father. That is what that light is for. Without light no fellowship, no union, no knowledge.

Light is a recognised synonym for knowledge. That is simply in your dictionary.

Paul here demonstrates the problem and the working of the Scriptures. It appears that he is referring to Genesis 1. The first time God spoke He said: Let there be light (Genesis 1:3). If you read that there, you do not think that that statement applies to our New Testament dispensation and to the preaching of the gospel in a world of the ungodly and ignorant. Paul says, however, that that is what it is about. These things must therefore be

understood spiritually (1 Corinthians 2:14—But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned).

What is that: spiritually discerned? That is the familiar story of taking biblical statements literally or spiritualising them. You begin with literal and then comes spiritual. It is not either/or, but always both/and. Even with things where you look for nothing behind them, such as the statement in Genesis 1:3. That is how it works in literature too. Literature is literature because there is something behind the superficial meaning of the language. The art is to say at least two things at once with the same words. If anyone masters that art, it is the One who is the Word and is identified with the Word: the great Author, God Himself.

God speaks, and the first thing He says is: “Let there be light.” When God speaks to us, He gives light—in our hearts, of course. That is also stated here: 6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

First there is only darkness, and when God speaks, there is light—even if it is not stated. After all, all things that are reproofed are made manifest by the light (Ephesians 5:13). So it concerns things that are understood spiritually. In our present dispensation more than ever, because this dispensation is characterised by God hiding His face. On the surface there is nothing to see. You must look through it, listen. For some that is no problem at all, but for others it is such a great problem that they do not even understand that it is a problem, because they have no idea what it is about.

For the study of Scripture there is no method or protocol. You must simply be a good understander. A good understander needs only half a word, after which a poor understander says it is not there at all, or not quite. That is how communication works, and certainly the word of God.

Nevertheless, God shines with His light in our hearts. Among the Corinthians in general, this was not the case, for they were not open to it. They were self-centred. They were like children.

2 Corinthians 4:7

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us;

Paul immediately switches to figurative language.

Do you have to pay tax on that treasure? No, but it is certainly a form of wealth. It is regarded as something valuable.

An earthen vessel is indeed an earthen vessel, but of course this is not about a literal earthen pot. You must compare several statements about it with one another. They complement each other. You place them side by side, and only then do you fully understand what it is all about. In this case it is not particularly difficult, but in other instances it can be rather more challenging. To put it irreverently, knowledge comes to us in instalments rather than in a set order. It arrives in portions. Peter says that there are various prophecies, yet no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation (2 Pet. 1:20). You really ought to lay the others alongside it first, and the initial question is: Which others? But you soon discover that as you go along. You find cross-references and keywords, concepts that recur, which you then have to place side by side. In that way you make considerable progress by drawing conclusions. When drawing those

conclusions, the question arises whether it is literally stated in the Bible. Some say yes, others no.

Man in general is described as a vessel, in the broad sense of a utensil or implement. Many regard this as the most obvious tool one needs in life, such as a chamber pot, a cup, a pan, and so forth. Afterwards the term is applied to all tools. That is why all the equipment of the tabernacle is called “the vessels”; the holy vessels, because they were consecrated to the service of God.

By following another line of thought, one could also use the term “weapon,” meaning implement or tool. That is why we are to yield our members as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13).

Vessels, weapons, tools—in general. A human being is an implement for God, made from the earth, for the first man is of the earth, earthy (1 Cor. 15:47). The first man is of the earth and thus a vessel. The pitcher, the vessel, goes to the well until it breaks (Eccl. 12:6). It is not stated literally, yet it is there.

The earthen vessel is simply the human body, formed from the earth. God formed man of the dust of the ground. It proved to be hollow. Then God breathed into it the breath of life (the neshamah), and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7). Before that, he was a dead soul. Admittedly, that exact term does not appear in the Bible, but that is due to the translators, for the expression occurs many times in the Old Testament in the original text, rendered as “dead bodies.”

We have this treasure in earthen vessels. That is to say, the vessel has value depending on what is inside it, for the vessel itself costs nothing at all. After all, all the raw materials are free. If it does cost something, that is due to labour costs. An earthen vessel is made of soil, of dust. There is plenty of it. If the vessel has any worth, it comes from what is contained within.

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, in our hearts, in our inner being. Psychology has made the matter very complicated with regard to the inner man and the heart, but the Bible speaks of the outward man and the inward man. The soul is the outward man, including the hormones and chemicals that determine our mood. The inward man is called the spirit, heart, mind, or understanding.

We have this treasure inwardly, in these earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. A treasure is a fortune. It therefore has power; it can accomplish something; it does something. A treasure is a treasure because it is valuable. That is called wealth, and therefore it can achieve something. In other words, it produces an effect in us: namely power. That power does not come from ourselves or from the natural man. The power is not in the vessel but in the contents of the vessel. That is what makes the vessel a vessel unto honour. If there is nothing in it, or only wood, hay, and stubble, then it becomes a vessel unto dishonour (see Rom. 9:21; 2 Tim. 2:20).

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:17). That excellency of power is not of us, but of God. In this way Paul touches on the very theme that gave rise to this epistle. The idea was that the Corinthians regarded Paul as rather weak. He evidently did not have an impressive presence. At any rate, they thought not. Moreover, they considered him a poor speaker. He was clearly not a charismatic figure, at least by modern standards, which focus on the outward. In reality Paul was highly charismatic, but inwardly. As regards rhetoric he achieved little. The Corinthians would know, for they had schools of philosophy and rhetoric.

What Paul is about to say is this: “You are quite right in saying that I am a weak figure, yet the fact remains that through my ministry your entire local church came into being. And that is nothing compared with all the other churches that arose through my preaching. That can therefore never have been by my own strength, for as you yourselves say, I am but weak. It must therefore have been by the power of God.”

And so it was. On the one hand it may sound like a clever argument, but on the other hand it was indeed the case. The epistle concludes in the same vein: “I will glory in mine infirmities” (2 Cor. 12:9).

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. This principle applies to every believer. Where the Word is written in our hearts, there it will save our souls (the vessel) (Jas. 1:21); there it will produce an effect in us. In other words, faith will produce works that save us in soul.

Paul then continues with how it is with these earthen vessels.

2 Corinthians 4:8

We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair;

We who have this treasure in earthen vessels are troubled on every side. Humanly speaking, that is a weakness. Strictly speaking, trouble ought to lead to distress, but not in our case. (The great tribulation is also called in the Bible the day of trouble—Zeph. 1:15.)

Moreover, there is always doubt. Not about the content of the Word of God, not about the treasure, but obviously about the ministry. Paul must often have wondered whether he was doing it all correctly. Also about where he should go next. Sometimes he did not know, and then someone would cry, “Come over into Macedonia, and help us,” and he went from Troas to Philippi, via the islands of the sea (Acts 16:9–13). Well, that must be understood spiritually.

Perplexed, but not in despair. For then there would be no courage left at all.

2 Corinthians 4:9

Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;

Persecution brings loneliness. You become isolated. Persecution at the very least means that you must do certain things in secret. Nevertheless, Paul says they are persecuted, but not forsaken. Cast down—as though thrown away. That naturally leads to destruction. But they are not destroyed, because the power of God works in them. That is the treasure, that wealth.

2 Corinthians 4:10

Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Here the name “Christ” is expressly not used. To the outwardly minded person He is the same as the Lord Jesus. For Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever (Heb. 13:8). He is indeed the same, but the question is whether it is the same thing. It is not about Christ, but about Jesus. The Lord Jesus without the title Christ is the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. Before His death and resurrection and obviously after His birth in Bethlehem. Before His birth He was not called Jesus at all.

In other words, this choice of words points to the Lord Jesus in His walk on earth, in His situation at that time. That is entirely fitting, because we too are still in our days of flesh. We bear about the dying—the working of death. We carry with us in the body the working of the death of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. In the light of the preceding verses, it should not be difficult to understand what this means.

The Lord Jesus Himself lived here on earth in His walk in a human body. He was made like unto us in all things; He was tempted in all points like as we are. He also wept on occasion and cried unto God (with strong crying and tears—Heb. 5:7). That is called prayer, but also an offering (see the same verse). Yet in His heart too this light of the Word of God shone.

The notion that the Lord Jesus always was and always will be, that He was God, the eternal Son (even retrospectively), and that here on earth He was merely disguised as a man because He remained God, may seem a doctrine that glorifies and exalts Him, but in reality people have a personal interest in viewing Him that way, for it means that all His merits as a man on earth are reasoned away—after all, He was God! What He could do, we need not and cannot do, for we are but weak humans. That conveniently lets one off the hook.

But the Bible does not tell it that way. The Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus lived here on earth as a man, who from His mother's womb (as indeed were quite a few others) was called to the prophetic office and thus to serve God. Primarily through the Word. For that is the office of a prophet. And that is what He did.

He came to earth as Man. He had indeed chosen His parents well, making Him the Heir of Adam from the royal line of Judah. That gave Him the title "Son of man" and the corresponding rights, which though no longer recognised by men were recognised by God. And in the end that is the only thing that counts.

He was Man, yet He lived from what God had spoken. At some point in His life it must have become clear to Him who He was. Perhaps His parents told Him, or His uncle, Joseph of Arimathaea. At twelve years old He already understood how things stood. In His conversation with Nicodemus He could rightly rebuke him for ignorance, for He said of Himself: "We speak that we do know..." (John 3). That means the Lord Jesus told him that He had simply read it in the Scriptures, and Nicodemus could have known it too. After all, he was a teacher in Israel. That is why the Lord Jesus marvelled at it. The Lord said: "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12), from which it follows that those heavenly things are indeed described in the Old Testament. In this regard it concerns matters relating to the Church and the calling of the Church. Are they in the Old Testament? Perhaps hidden, but if you cannot find them, you must search better, for if they are hidden in it, they are certainly there. Otherwise they could not be hidden. When solving a cryptogram, you do not say you do not know what goes in the squares because it is not there. If you do not know, you must think longer about it. How? No idea, but it is there. And afterwards it proves correct: horizontally and vertically. It interlocks, and therefore you know for certain it is right. That is not only true in the Bible; it is applied in literature in the same way.

In the same way you read of the Lord Jesus that He increased in wisdom and stature... (Luke 2:40, 52). That means He was born just as empty as we are.

But was there not a difference between Him and us? Yes, but that difference lay in the vessel. Perhaps partly also in the material of the vessel. Nevertheless, that vessel had to be filled, and His vessel was filled with the same things as ours are filled with—namely the Word of God. The first sign that the Lord Jesus did was to fill vessels with water, after which that water was turned into wine. We are filled with the Word of God, and something happens to it. It becomes wine, a picture of eternal life. The Lord still performs that miracle today, provided you allow yourself to be filled with the Word, by whomever it may be.

If all is well, we follow the example of the Lord Jesus, who was indeed troubled, perplexed, and persecuted. In short, in Him the working of death was present. When He was barely thirty, His age was estimated at about fifty. That is the working of death in the outward man. “Who shall declare his generation?” was already written in Isa. 53:8.10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

It is not only about His crucifixion, but also about the working of death during His life. That working expresses itself in being persecuted and troubled and in being perplexed. The Lord did not withdraw to pray for nothing on occasion. He prayed with tears and strong crying. He was a Man who was used by God and as Man looked ahead to it and found it difficult to bear the consequences. It ultimately led to His crucifixion, notably on the basis of His highest human title: the Son of man.

In the life of the Lord Jesus too that living Word was manifested. His life was marked by faithfulness to the Word of God. In practice that is obedience. That primarily means hearing, and only secondarily doing. He was obedient to His heavenly Father. He therefore said: “The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.” And the things that I do are not mine, but the works of my Father. Submission, then, to God and His Word, for the joy that was set before Him, summed up in the words of Heb. 12.

So it ought to be with us too. Peter says that the Lord Jesus left us an example, and Paul writes that we should be followers of Christ. The classic, well-known truth is that we should be followers of Christ, even followers of Jesus. We should take His walk on earth as our example. That is indeed biblical. The question is whether you see both sides of His life. To avoid having to see it, an important part of the identity of Jesus of Nazareth has been reasoned away and He has been made God disguised in flesh. People say “manifest in the flesh” because that is an expression from 1 Tim. 3:16, but wrongly, for the whole word “God” does not appear in the original text there. It is not about God, but about mystery, manifested in the flesh.

He was not God manifested in the flesh, nor even God disguised in the flesh, though that is what people practically mean by it. He was Man. In His incarnation He emptied Himself of His Godhead. He became poor for our sakes, it says. People have of course concluded from that that He was penniless. Conveniently they overlook the visit of the wise men from the east who brought Him gifts. Scarcely had He appeared in the world than He was already rich in material terms. Yet that does not outweigh what He laid aside in His incarnation.

It strongly appears that the Lord was by no means penniless and that He had ample financial means at His disposal. In the Gospels one finds not the slightest suggestion that He lacked money. On the contrary. The problem of feeding five thousand men was

not a money problem. At least that is not given as the reason. There are several other examples, but nowhere is a money problem mentioned.

He came to earth and was just as empty as we all are at birth. He too, so to speak, had to go to primary school. In that He is an example to us. We too should allow ourselves to be filled with the Word of God. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? The question is who the young man is. The Lord Jesus (Psalm 119. Read all the verses). Who is the One speaking there? Whose delight is in the law of the LORD, who meditates on the law, the precepts, the testimonies, and the light day and night, and has it in His heart? The Lord Jesus.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (Ps. 16:10). Peter said this concerns Jesus, the Son of David, and David knew it. Is that also in Psalm 16? According to Peter yes, but to the natural man it is not there at all. It may not be stated outright, but it is there. When Peter said it is there, he said: “Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you” (Acts 2:29). It depends on how much attention you pay to what is written. The question is whether you meditate on it and take it seriously. Whether you want to know it, for that is really what it comes down to. It is not the intention that only the negative things of the Lord Jesus should be in our life or come to us, but that the life also of Jesus (here it is not about His resurrection life) might be made manifest in us. It is about the life of Jesus. That that life might be made manifest in us. That is a life of faith, of submission to the Word of God, in which we are not slothful or unwise in believing all that the prophets have spoken, even if it brings us into conflict with the religious world in general and with Judaism in particular.

2 Corinthians 4:11

For we which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

We which live = we who have received life. For we were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past we walked (Eph. 2:1).

We are always delivered unto that dying of verse 10, through the working of corruption, for Jesus’ sake, as His followers. The purpose is that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. That body is still mortal, in which that dying is borne about. After all, we can only be persecuted in the flesh.

Our position in the world is fundamentally the same as that of the Lord Jesus. That does not say everything. We are born again, whereas He was not yet in those days, but does that make a practical difference?

The life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. The idea is that our mortal bodies would be quickened, as is also stated for example in Rom. 6 and 8. There it does not speak of dead flesh or of the future resurrection of the flesh, but of the mortal body being quickened in the present. That happens through the working of the Word of God.

In the context of the second epistle to the Corinthians, the emphasis is not so much on regeneration as such, but on the idea that where that Word is present in man, there is life in man—which is of course entirely consistent. That applies to all practical applications.

Where we allow ourselves to be filled with the Word of God, that places us outside the camp, and we bear His reproach. You do not have to go looking for that, but you should accept the consequences of having become a minister of the new covenant. That

places us outside the old covenant and thus outside the camp. The Lord Jesus Himself was placed there, and we are His followers. For that reason we bear His reproach, because we are not religious and do not live under the law. For ministers of the new covenant there is no place in this world.

There was no room for Him in the inn. That historical circumstance immediately expresses the nature of His entire walk. There was no room for Him in society, in the home, in the inn, in Jerusalem. If He was ever in it, He was thrown out.

Phil. 3:8

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

Loss and gain = a profit-and-loss account.

10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Verse 8 ends with: that I may win Christ; verse 10 begins with: that I may know him. That is another way of saying the same thing.

The power of his resurrection = the life of Christ.

And the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

Here we find the same two concepts: His life and His sufferings and death. Here it reaches slightly further than in 2 Cor. 4:11, for there it is about the life of Jesus and here about the life of Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, they are clearly in line with each other. It is the same principle: that we should count worldly things as loss and take distance from them, in order to share in the gain, namely the life of Jesus, or the life of Christ. Why?

That we may know Him and that His life may be manifested in us.

Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself, became poor, for the sake of what was set before Him. As a result God also highly exalted Him. We too shall receive reward for that. That is discussed in

2 Corinthians 4:12

So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, and so death works in us, but life also.

Paul applies the negative aspect to himself and the positive to the Corinthians. That may sound rather cynical on Paul's part, for obviously the intention is that death should work in the Corinthians as well. Conversely, the life would of course be manifested in Paul too.

In other words, the Corinthians see only half and want to see only half. They are willing to see that Paul is weak and falls short by human standards, but not that the life of Jesus, or of Christ, is manifested in him; that there is indeed power working in and through him. That is also stated in what follows.

2 Corinthians 4:13

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;

The same spirit, which one receives on the basis of faith. Or better: the Spirit one receives according as one believes. To the extent that we believe, we receive that Spirit.

To the extent that we believe all that the prophets have spoken, we shall also be filled with that Spirit.

The sentence is: Since we have believed in the same spirit of faith, we also believe, and therefore speak. The interposed clause is a quotation from Ps. 116:10.

If you believe, you receive that Spirit. If you receive that Spirit, it works outward. The most obvious way in which that Spirit expresses itself is through the tongue. The Spirit speaks, by definition. Yet one could also understand that speaking stands for far more than merely speaking. It stands for every working from within outward.

When speaking of the natural man and his sinfulness and unbelief, the mouth, tongue, throat, and lips are mentioned. Then follow the hands and feet (Rom. 3, from verse 9). Speaking is called the most essential thing in man: the thoughts of man that come out. Where we are inwardly changed by the renewing of our mind, different words come out, but not only different words. If you had to name one sin, you would probably not immediately think of gainsaying. By biblical standards, however, the sin is especially that of gainsaying: a gainsaying and rebellious people. The Lord bore with the sin of the gainsayers against Him. It is always about words that come out, which of course are accompanied by deeds.

Paul says that we have received that Spirit on the basis of faith. You could also put it the other way round: that we believe and thus have received the Word in which we believe. That Word is in us. Whether it is the Spirit in us or the Word makes no difference. The result is that you speak the words of God and perhaps also do those words.

Paul says this is a biblical principle. He takes it from Psalm 116.

Ps. 116:10

I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted.

That affliction is connected with faith, with pursuing the truth. Then you are troubled by the world, especially if you speak that truth. Pursuing the truth = speaking the truth, though not necessarily with the mouth, throat, lips, or tongue.

I believed and walked and lived from it. Naturally you then speak of it, verbally or not. Nevertheless, we probably know the variant of this verse: "I believed, therefore I sing..." That hymn is based on this verse. It appears in a psalm, and the idea is that a psalm should be sung, so that the "speaking" mentioned in this verse becomes singing. Singing does not necessarily mean that it must be performed to a specific tune. In the Bible, singing is always collective singing, a joining together in song. When the same words or thoughts are uttered together simultaneously (even if expressed in slightly different words), that is called singing. "I believed, therefore I sing" implies that others are singing along with me.

The great multitude of the heavenly host were praising God, saying... This does not mean they were not singing, for the united utterance of the same words or thoughts is called singing. In Psalm 116, therefore, the reference is to something communal. If you read the preceding verses, you realise that it concerns resurrection from the dead. It is about how the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, would declare the praise and glory of God to His brethren, or in the midst of the great congregation (see Ps. 40, Ps. 22, and many others besides). It concerns resurrection from the dead. Thereafter the Word of God would be made known—not to the world, not to the natural man, and in practice not even to natural, soulish believers. They would not understand a single syllable of it. It concerns a spiritual disposition.

2 Corinthians 4:13

We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;
If you believe, then you believe in word form. Faith is trust in what is spoken. If you truly believe, it means that the words you believe will in some way produce an effect in your life and be passed on. You talk about them. That is precisely what Paul does and what he says here. In 2 Cor. 3:18 it is called beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. You receive it and pass it on.

2 Cor. 5:11; 20

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...

20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The apostle speaks in weakness (I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling—1 Cor. 2:3), yet it concerns the power of the Spirit, the Word of God working through the weak believer.

2 Corinthians 4:14

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

To raise up means the working of God's power—in Jesus, but also in Paul and Timothy. Here again the word "Christ" is not used, but "Jesus," implying that this working as such also took place before the resurrection of Christ.

To raise up does not necessarily mean raising from the dead. It can of course mean that, but the context must show it. When we are heartily stirred up to attend the meetings, that has nothing to do with raising from the dead. It concerns urging someone on, making someone alive in the sense of making them active.

Here it states that the power of God worked in Jesus. That this power worked in such a way that He also rose from the dead is true, but that is not the specific point here. It concerns the general principle that ought to be clear to every Corinthian: where the Word of God is power and we believe that Word, it will produce an effect in our lives. Otherwise we resist it or do not truly believe it. In practice the difference is academic. In Romans 6 it is stated that as believers we have died, been buried, and been raised up, so that we should no longer serve sin.

Rom. 6:8

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Not in the future, but now in this life. Although "shall" may grammatically be an auxiliary verb of the future tense, the idea is that "shall" arises from something previously accepted as true: If this is so, then that will also be so. Not only in the future, but in the present. There is no progression of time here, but a development of certain logic. One thing flows logically from the other.

If we have died with Christ, then surely we shall also live with Him. That is the reasoning. Not in the future, but in the present. It cannot be otherwise, for the context of the chapter makes it plain.

Indeed, it says: If we live with Him, then we should yield our bodies as instruments of righteousness. Not only in the future, after the bodily resurrection, but in the present. The same is stated in Romans 8...

Rom. 8:11

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.

“Shall... in the future”? No, because it does not say that He shall quicken our dead bodies, but our mortal bodies. Those bodies have not yet died, yet they are already being quickened. That happens before our death, now. For we should now be led by that Spirit towards what is to come in the future, namely the redemption of our body and the adoption as sons, from verse 23. It concerns the present. Then we read again 2 Cor. 4:14: Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.

Not only in the future, but in the present. Of course it has an effect towards the future and so it will be for ever. That is why the next chapter deals with the bodily resurrection. Not yet here.

2 Corinthians 4:15

For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.

All that weakness, affliction, and distress are for your sakes, but so too is the manifestation of the life of Jesus. Why? So that the multiplied grace, through the thanksgiving of many, might abound to the glory of God. That is a grace that grows greater and greater. All these things are so that grace might be multiplied, that grace might increase. That increasing grace leads to more thanksgiving, and that greater thanksgiving is to the greater glory of God. Thanksgiving is not limited to mouth, tongue, throat, and lips, but is also expressed in the ordinary walk of the believer. One does not need to explain that to Reformed believers. They have the doctrine of gratitude. Yet they think that this means living under the Old Covenant, whereas we ought rather to live under the New Covenant, under the exceeding riches of God's grace. That is called thanksgiving, but also praise and worship. Of course it is perfectly natural to do this with the mouth, but it is good to note that one does it just as much in one's practical walk of life, in one's practical service to the Lord.

It is a pleasant thought that the Church exists to the glory of God, but that is a practical truth. It should come to expression in the practice of our lives.

Renewal of the inward man

2 Corinthians 4: 16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Here we return once more to the fundamental thought. For which cause we faint not, so that we might reflect the glory of the Lord and be changed into the same image from glory to glory (3:18). Then it continues: For which cause we faint not, for that reason. Now it repeats that we do not faint. The Corinthians may not have wanted to listen to Paul, but he does not faint. When the Sanhedrin told Peter and John that they must no longer speak in the name of Jesus, Peter said they would simply carry on, because they could not but speak. Paul explains it more fully here. He says that they (he and his companions) do not faint; moreover, the love of Christ constrains us and we are ambassadors for Christ. He simply carried on, whether they wanted to hear it or not.

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish...The “though” qualifies what follows. It may be that..., but...Though our outward man (the natural man) perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The earthen vessel keeps going to the well until it breaks.

The inward man = the mind, the heart, the spirit.

In biology lessons we learn that the body of the natural man also renews itself (every seven years or so all your body cells are replaced by new ones). In practice that seems to be the ideal, yet often a few are missing, or they are there but not functioning properly. That is called ageing. We know the ideals, but they do not exist. They ought to exist.

If we use extra-biblical sources for a moment, the most important biblical source of truth is creation itself, for we can know God from creation. From that we learn that ideals must exist somewhere, but they are not here. They must therefore exist elsewhere. If they are not in the visible world but are nonetheless suggested by it, then you find them in the invisible. In the visible you find the approach towards... the occasion for, for example, the ideal of the perfect circle, but in nature it does not occur. It simply does not exist, yet it is there. That is what is described here.

The inward man is renewed day by day. Not only renewed, but also built up day by day.

2 Corinthians 4:17

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

How does Paul suddenly arrive at “light affliction”? Later in this epistle we get a long list of what that affliction consists of. It covers nearly half a page. So how can it be called light affliction? It all depends on what you compare it with.

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment. That is what it says. That light affliction works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. That is the superlative of weight.

For which cause we faint not, for the affliction which is but for a moment works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. This expression also explains why the affliction is regarded as light. Objectively it probably is not, but relatively it is, in comparison with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

In any case Paul is saying that the not fainting of verse 16, and also of verse 1, evidently involves affliction. Moreover, it is an affliction to which the Corinthians themselves also contribute.

Paul directs his gaze, and ours, towards the future. If that affliction were not compensated, it would have little purpose. That has nothing to do with yin and yang, or with Islam.

Rom. 8:18 also speaks of it: For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. That glory includes the adoption as sons, the final appointment in connection with the birthright. That is what is in view here too, for the following Scripture portion says that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive there what is due for things done in the body (see also Rom. 14:7–12). Paul finds it quite self-evident that this position involves suffering. On the one hand there is the working of the death of Jesus in us, but on the other hand the life of Christ/Jesus. Both form part of the experience of the practical

Christian life. Under those circumstances we should not look at the things which are seen, for they matter little.

2 Corinthians 4:18

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Of course this is stated rather starkly in black-and-white terms here, for there are grey areas in between. The least that I should be judged of you—the “least” is still just a touch of grey, but Paul means to say that it does not interest him in the slightest. The things which are seen are temporal. They all pass away. The things which are not seen are eternal. This does not mean that all invisible things are eternal. Paul is of course referring to certain invisible things—namely the glory which is for the present invisible, which according to Romans 8 will be revealed to us. If it is to be revealed in the future, then it must already exist now, though evidently invisible. It is those invisible things that are in view here. Evil spirits are also generally invisible, yet they will not exist for ever.

We look at the things which are not seen. We consider the High Priest of our profession (Heb. 3:1). We do not see Him, for we do not yet see all things put under Him, but we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

We look at heavenly things. We seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God (Col. 3:1–3).

What then of those invisible things and that far more exceeding glory that is worked for us? The next chapter deals with that.

Verse 17 begins with “for” and is a comment on verse 16, but you can also read straight on into chapter 5:1, which also begins with “for.” The inward man is renewed day by day, for we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved...Chapter 5

The longing for heaven

2 Corinthians 5:1

1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

This of course has to do with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

We should be faithful to the Lord and to the New Covenant. After all, we have been made able ministers of the New Covenant. We do not live under the veil and should therefore indeed put away that veil and remain faithful to the Lord and to the light that He gives us, with which He has shone in our hearts.

In short, for that reason we faint not. Paul testifies first of all concerning himself and Timothy. He sets these things before the Corinthians as an example.

For we know... Paul now speaks about that eternal weight of glory. He speaks about the body, which might be found naked, or else clothed or clothed upon. In fact it concerns the entire appearance of man, and in that connection the body is in view. It concerns the body and everything that belongs to it.

Our earthly house of this tabernacle = our earthly house, namely this tabernacle.

Tabernacle = tent, in the sense of a temporary dwelling and thus also of a temporary body. In the first epistle to the Corinthians believers, and believers collectively, are

spoken of as a temple. There is indeed reference to the earthly body of the believer. This earthly body is a temporary temple, and a temporary temple is called a tabernacle. Unfortunately this verse immediately makes people think of death. In the very remotest sense it may concern that too, but Paul is not so much expecting bodily death; well, perhaps he is, but that is not our hope and in most cases not what we look forward to. That is not our prospect for the future. It may happen to us before then, but it adds nothing and subtracts nothing from the future hope we have. The intention was that the Lord should quicken our mortal bodies even now. It therefore appears that what is spoken of here is the rapture of the Church.

In the epistles to the Thessalonians the future of the Church is discussed, namely the rapture of the Church. That does not prevent one from saying that both epistles speak of the sanctification of believers. That is also true. The question, however, is what purpose that serves if this life is temporary and we are all merely sojourners. And that brings us to the continuation: that as believers we shall be changed, receive a glorified body, and share with Christ in His glory, in His kingship, in His priesthood—and all at His coming. Some say that the epistles to the Thessalonians are not about the rapture but about the second coming of Christ. In a certain sense that is true, but for that purpose the Church must first go to meet the Lord, for otherwise He cannot come with the Church. That is how it is stated.

The idea remains that the glory which is to be revealed is in some way proportionate to our sanctification here on earth. That is what both epistles are about. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification (1 Thess. 4:3), with the result that we shall be glorified together with Christ. There is a causal connection between them. That is how it is explained here in 2 Corinthians 4 and 5 as well.

Here, however, one does not immediately read of the rapture of the Church. That expression does not occur here, but of course there are other expressions for precisely the same thing.

Although words such as “dissolved” do not immediately seem to be associated with the rapture of the Church, that is nevertheless what it concerns, for at the rapture nothing remains or is left of our earthly bodies. It is simply no longer there. One could just as well read 2 Cor. 5:10 straight after 4:16:

2 Cor. 4:16

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

2 Cor. 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The inward man is renewed day by day, for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

What is elsewhere called the rapture of the Church (1 Thess. 4:17) is here called our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. That is in fact the immediate sequel to the rapture of the Church. In practice, however, there will be no difference whatever between them. It is one and the same event. At the rapture of the Church we receive the things done in the body. We are changed and receive the glory promised to us. For corruption does not inherit incorruption. We inherit it at any rate on the last day of the seventieth week of Daniel—that is at most seven years after the rapture of the Church. If

we are to be revealed in glory with Him, this implies that for that purpose we go to meet Him. That is explicitly stated in 1 Thess. 4 as one whole. Therefore the rapture of the Church must not be separated from our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, nor vice versa.

Here too you find that. If in verse 10 you find the appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, where then do you find the rapture of the Church? In verse 1, when our earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved. That is not so much dying, but the change of the believer.

If our earthly house were dissolved = as soon as...Not "if" in the sense of "supposing," for it will be dissolved, without question. The old creation passes away. That is certain. Therefore "if" here means "when" or "as soon as." When that happens.

Our earthly house = we have a house from the earth. The first man is of the earth, earthy (1 Cor. 15:47). It also says there that the corruptible must put on incorruption. We must first be delivered from this earthly house before we can receive the inheritance kept for us. That takes place at our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

Our earthly house = this tabernacle, this tent. In these verses one ought to read something about a temple. Our bodies are supposed to be a temple of the Lord Jesus Christ, of God Himself, who would dwell in us.

You cannot prove that this word is intended to mean that, but from the context it can clearly be shown that Paul means it that way. Of course a tabernacle is not necessarily a portable temple; a tabernacle can be any tent. Nevertheless the word is used where the indwelling of the Spirit, of God, or of Christ is in mind.

The idea from the context is that we already serve the Lord now, that we are a priestly people. Our house is then logically a temple, yet it is still of a perishable nature. A temple of a perishable nature we call a tabernacle. Think of that "thing" from the time of Moses. It was later to be replaced by a permanent building, a temple. That is stated here too. 1 Thess. 4 says in that connection that we who remain alive unto the coming of the Lord shall be changed, to go thereafter to meet Him in the air, to be for ever with the Lord and thus to share in the coming of the Lord. Some then say that the coming of the Lord begins at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel and that therefore the Church is raptured at the end of that seventieth week. After all, it says: we who remain alive unto the coming of the Lord. They then fail to read what follows and what is stated in many other Scripture passages: that when the Son of man comes (that is, at the coming of the Lord), He comes with His many thousands of saints and thus with His Church. 1 Thess. 4 plainly states that for that purpose we shall go to meet Him and that this happens first. It is all there. Premature conclusions are drawn, after which the rest of the passage is fitted and squeezed into those premature conclusions. That is how problems usually arise.

Many Christians have certain doctrines, and everything they read in the Bible is forced into the narrow framework of those doctrines.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved.

"Dissolved" is not a wrong translation, but the word really means "to loose" or "to release." It comes from *luō*, from which the concept of "redeemer" (*lytron*) also derives.

"Broken" would be *kata-luō*. *Kata* = a preposition meaning "down."

Prepositions, however, are peculiar things. In Greek they are placed before a verb merely to strengthen the verb itself.

What the preposition means on its own has nothing to do with it. In English it works the same way. We often do not know which preposition to use. Usually several options exist.

An example in Greek:

Lasso = to reconcile;

Katalasso = to reconcile downwards (nonsense, of course);

Apokatalasso = to reconcile downwards again.

Naturally, all of this means nothing except that the word acquires a stronger emotional force.

Luo = to loose or release, and from “loosing” one arrives at breaking—namely the breaking of a bond, a rope, or a cord. It does not necessarily mean the demolition of a house, but rather a loosing or setting free. Elsewhere it is called being “loosed” to be with Christ, which is far better. It concerns being loosed from this earthly tabernacle. We then have a building with God. The text actually says: a building from God, though the translation is not incorrect. In either case it means that God is the origin of this building. In practice it means that God is the Creator of this building. If it is from God, it comes out of God.

A building = oikodomē = a structure. This is the same word we frequently encounter in the Corinthian epistles: edification and edifying likewise come from oikodomē.

The Church is a building and is to be built up. Everything that is edifying contributes to that building.

A building from God, a house. In place of the old one—namely the tabernacle—we now receive a house that is permanent.

That house is not made with hands (not of this creation). The expression “made with hands” does not literally mean something fashioned by human hands. It is the biblical phrase for the entire tangible, visible world. The whole creation, the heavens and the earth, were made by God and are the work of His hands. Yet everything God does, He does with His tongue—by speaking, through His Word. Nevertheless it is called the work of His hands.

John says that nothing was made without the Word.

That which is made with hands corresponds to a circumcision made with hands.

“Not made with hands” means that it does not belong to this old creation. If one must think in terms of hands, then think of the hands of God Himself. He has no hands literally, but figuratively He does. If He does have hands literally, then they are the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the Person of the Godhead, the express image of God’s person.

We therefore have a building of God, a house not made with hands, a house not belonging to the old creation, a house not belonging to the things that are seen, but eternal in the heavens.

The things that are seen (the things made with hands) pass away and are temporal, but that building from God is eternal and invisible. Yet surely it will be a glorified body and will be revealed? Yet here one arrives at the idea that it is an invisible body.

One explanation is that a house or building of this kind is, for us while we are still in the body, invisible—just as the Lord Himself is. People did see Him after His resurrection, but those were always specific appearances in which the invisible was, for the

occasion, made visible. This occurs quite frequently in the Bible. The Lord opened their eyes and suddenly they saw... a multitude of the heavenly host, for example. The other explanation is that it is suggested—not more than suggested—that this building, which we shall suddenly possess, already exists beforehand. At any rate it will have been built before then. In other words, the glorified body we shall have in the future we already receive now. We are now in the process of obtaining it. 2 Cor. 3:18 says that we are changed from glory to glory. That is happening now. Moreover, we are being built now. All the Scripture passages that speak of the building up of the Church apply equally to the building up of the individual believer. When it speaks of things that are edifying or edification, that concerns the present. Building is taking place now on that glorified body—or at least on the glory that will be displayed in that glorified body. The idea is that we already have that glorified body, but it cannot yet be seen. The glory certainly does not cling to this old body. We now have a body of humiliation, and hereafter we shall have a glorified body. That does not alter the fact that there is a connection between the glory of that future glorified body and the building work now. All those Scripture portions concern the present work of Christ, which would have no purpose if it were terminated by death and then suddenly replaced by something entirely different—namely a glorified body. That is what many people ideally imagine, because they fear that sanctification here will not amount to much and hope that it will simply be swept away and replaced by a standard glorified body. The French principle of equality has also taken hold of Christian thinking. People suppose that we shall all be equal with the Lord hereafter simply because we find that ideal here. Yet that is not ideal here. Moreover, the Bible teaches that we are not all equal—neither now nor in the future. The Bible also teaches that what is humbled here will be exalted there, and what is exalted here will be humbled there.

The Lord changes people. He does so now. That change is therefore being effected now. The result of that change will be revealed in the future. That is why John can say in 1 John 3:2 that it doth not yet appear what we shall be. It has been made known to us. We shall be sons, but not all equally. He does not say that it will then be brought about, but that it will then be made manifest. Romans 8 also says that the glory shall be revealed in us. It concerns the glory in us that shall be revealed. The glory in us shall be revealed. Revealed to whom? To the world, for the world waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. The intention is that we should already bear glory now. The intention is also that the Lord should already deal with us as with sons (Heb. 12:7). It is just as well that we cannot see these things. The angels, however, can see them.

Returning to 2 Cor. 5:1 - For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

What is chiefly in view here is therefore the rapture of the Church. It can hardly be otherwise, for glory is immediately spoken of, since reference is made to being naked, clothed, or clothed upon—as the result of judgement and assessment, as the result of our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

If it were the case that at bodily death we immediately stood before the Judge and perhaps immediately received reward from Him, then what further need would there be for the appearing before the judgment seat of Christ in the day of Christ? Everyone will of course have to give account for himself, but the appearing before the judgment seat of Christ is a collective matter. It also concerns the shared future expectation of the

Church. In 1 Thess. 4 it is expressly stated that those who sleep in Jesus will rise first, and then we who remain shall together with them be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. That surely presupposes that on that occasion they will be found clothed, clothed upon, or naked. It is only then the day of Christ. Until that time they are waiting for it. If you find it difficult to accept the idea that those people are already in heaven with the Lord yet not yet glorified, consider that the general biblical thought is that all people who have died—believers and unbelievers alike—wait for the last day, except the believers of this dispensation. Only then will they be judged. They wait until the last day, whereas the believers of the Church wait for the day of Christ.

This is called the intermediate state. One is no longer here, but will only be judged in the future. The time in between is called the intermediate state. Others think that the departed sleep in the meantime, from which the doctrine of soul-sleep has arisen. The Bible describes people waiting in the realm of the dead for the judgement on the last day.

Nevertheless, we have this earthly house and look for a house eternal in the heavens. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven and therefore heavenly. We therefore expect a heavenly dwelling.

2 Corinthians 5:2

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

You can also read this verse directly after

2 Cor. 4:16:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

Though our outward man perishes through decay, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. The renewing work now continues and will therefore become visible when this earthly covering disappears.

We groan and are burdened in this tabernacle and wait with patience (Rom. 8:23) to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. That house is from God.

Here we notice a break in style. First it speaks only of a body, and now suddenly of the clothing of that body. Are we then to receive a glorified body or a glorified garment? It makes no difference. The body itself is also regarded as clothing—of the essence of the man. It is therefore really the same thing.

We earnestly desire to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.

The word “house” (or “dwelling”) appears elsewhere only in the epistle of Jude. In that epistle we find a list of situations in which the Lord brought judgement in the past, with the consequence that He will also bring judgement in the future.

Jude 6 And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Their first estate = their origin.

Jude speaks here of angels who left their original body. They left their own habitation. Habitation = oikētērion.

In the days of Noah the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men. Angels appeared on earth, for the occasion in an earthly body. They evidently found that pleasant. They behaved wickedly in it.

That habitation is here apparently the designation of a heavenly body, the designation of the body of angels, which we cannot see. Angels appear on occasion in visible form, but then it is still in an earthly body. In the Bible they are usually not described as angels but as men. They are indeed angels, but because they appeared in human form they are called men.

Angels therefore have a body in and with which they can do various things. That habitation is therefore a heavenly body.

That word appears elsewhere only in 2 Cor. 5:2.

We earnestly desire to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. It is therefore a heavenly habitation, whatever the Greek word might otherwise mean. We are to be clothed upon with that habitation. Our earthly body is likewise regarded as a garment. That body is the outward appearance of the man. One therefore hopes that there will at least be clothing or over-clothing, for the following verses speak of differences in glory that believers may receive, depending on what has been built. It is a building that is to be built, edified, by the present work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the believer. It does not depend on the Lord; it may depend on us. The question is whether we allow the Lord to do His work and whether we make ourselves available for it. That gives us, as reward, a share in His glory, in His inheritance. That gives weight and meaning to the days we still have in the flesh, in which we may fulfil the will of the Lord. There is a causal connection between sanctification and the rapture of the Church, our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, and our appearing in glory with Him.

2 Corinthians 5: 3 – 4

If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.

4 For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

Besides being clothed upon, one may also be found clothed or even naked.

We shall receive another body, but one body is more glorious than another. It is always called a glorified body, yet not all heavenly bodies are alike, just as not all earthly bodies are alike. That is stated literally in 1 Cor. 15, where reference is made to what we call heavenly bodies. Paul speaks there of the bodily resurrection.

The body that is raised is on the one hand of the same nature. It is the same body that was sown and buried, yet it is also different. There are differences and there are similarities.

1 Cor. 15:40

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another.

41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory.

The glory of the sun is different from that of the moon and of the stars. The stars also differ among themselves in glory. With stars one speaks of magnitudes. The brightness of stars has been divided into segments and numbered accordingly. It is therefore clear that it is really not all the same. There are very many stars that we cannot even distinguish individually from others, they are so faint. Other stars, on the contrary, are so bright that one cannot miss them. Then it continues...

1 Cor. 15:42

So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:

43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

In any case there is difference—both between the earthly and the heavenly body, and between earthly bodies among themselves and heavenly bodies among themselves. There is therefore reward to be received. That is just as well, for otherwise our life here on earth would be entirely pointless. That life ought to have lasting result. That gives meaning to life.

The philosopher says that life has no meaning and that this is convenient, for then we can give it meaning ourselves. Earthly life has no meaning in itself; it is vanity. The Lord gives meaning and substance to life. The extent to which we allow that determines how much meaning our life has had. That differs for everyone.

One can also receive a naked glorified body. Is that then a glorified body? Compared with earthly bodies, yes; but compared with other heavenly bodies it is the lowest option and in a certain sense even shameful.

We are indeed taught that whoever believes does not come into judgement, but the text that speaks of this does not concern a future judgement but the present judgement of God upon the world (John 3).

John 3:18

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already...

How can one already be condemned if one still has the opportunity to come to faith, and moreover the judgement will only be on the last day? Here, however, it is not about a future judgement but about the present judgement that God reveals upon the unbelieving world. The unbeliever lives in it, and thus the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against them (Rom. 1:18).

In 1 Cor. 3 it speaks of building on a foundation—namely of the temple. The present work of Christ concerns the building of a temple, namely the Church. Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. If he builds with wood, hay, and stubble, nothing will come of it. What has been built will in the future be tried by fire, and wood, hay, and stubble will not pass through that fire. It is expressly stated there that it concerns the works of the believer, and it may therefore be that of those works really nothing remains if the wrong materials were used.

But, it says, he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Such a person therefore falls into this category. He is not clothed upon, not clothed, but found naked. From him is taken even what he has. The pound is taken from him.

Nevertheless he did enter the kingdom.

There are quite a number of Scripture passages that speak in very strong terms about this judgement. That is the judgement before the judgment seat of Christ with regard to the Church. Especially in Hebrews very strong warnings are given to those who persist in living under the law, under the Old Covenant. They forfeit their inheritance and seek repentance afterwards but cannot find it, just as with Esau. The expression that God is a consuming fire occurs in that connection. That expression is used in relation to our

appearing before the judgment seat of Christ—in relation, therefore, to people who nevertheless have part in the rapture of the Church.

If one remains naked, that does involve some shame with which one must live for the rest of eternity. There are people who say that it is enough for them to get to heaven and that they will be content with a small corner somewhere. That sounds pious, modest, and humble, but in reality it looks very different. It is not the intention that we should be found naked. We should be clothed or clothed upon.

2 Corinthians 5: 4

For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

The life of a believer is heavy—at least if he wishes to be clothed or clothed upon. Mortality will be swallowed up of life. Mortality does indeed disappear, but it is consumed by life. It is taken up into eternal life. This old life therefore does have purpose and contributes to what is to come.

The general biblical truth is that the new creation that is to be made in some way proceeds from the old creation, in which the old creation therefore bears fruit and is fruitful for the new. The old is taken up into the new, is transformed into the new. Think of an egg. When an egg is fertilised and nature takes its course, after a time it opens and there is no longer any white or yolk inside. Where has it gone? It has been swallowed up of life.

In Revelation it is stated that the old heavens and the old earth are no more found. They are nowhere any longer. Where have they gone? Has not even a heap of ashes remained? For the old creation is burned up, is it not? Yet burning is a synonym for swallowing up. Fire consumes, eats up, devours. That is what it concerns. The old is transformed into the new. Mortality is swallowed up of life, yet it does contribute to that new life.

A more biblical illustration is found in the risen Christ, who on occasion shows His marks in His hands and side. He had a new and glorified body, which was demonstrated to the disciples in a remarkable way, yet it was recognisable. Not everything was recognisable, but part of it was. This does not mean that one will still have the scars of one's appendectomy hereafter, but it is certainly true that when we are with the Lord hereafter we shall be recognisable, we shall have identity, and we shall have our memories—better than now—of our life here on earth. Some think that we shall forget everything hereafter, probably because they are tormented by their memories here. The likelihood is that we shall then know far better—apart from how things were. We also expect to receive some explanation of how things really were. Moreover, if we are expected to tell how life out of grace is and about the work of grace that the Lord has done in us, then we must have some memory of it. If not, we must conclude that the Lord Himself no longer even knows that He was crucified in the past.

In any case, this world contributes in some way to the next. Mortality is swallowed up of life, of the new. It becomes part of it. One may think of “swallowed up” as something negative—that it is done away with—but that is at any rate not the meaning of the term here. It is absorbed into it and forms part of the new. That appears more or less from the next verse as well.

2 Corinthians 5: 5

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

“Now” = what has passed was Old Testament times, but now we live without the veil, now we have been made able to be ministers of the new covenant.

The earnest of the Spirit = the earnest, namely the Spirit. We have received that Spirit, but He is not visible, yet He does form part of the spiritual things.

That Spirit is in fact Christ in us, or the new life that has become ours through regeneration. We have that as an earnest.

Earnest = pledge or guarantee, but at the same time it carries the meaning of a down-payment. It is an advance on the remainder and thereby a security that the remainder will yet come. A deposit is not perhaps the most beautiful word in this connection, but it is of the same nature. It is arranged and confirmed. An earnest is given that gives assurance that more is yet to follow.

Earnest is quite often used in connection with the Spirit...

2 Cor. 1:22

Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

Sealing and earnest are overlapping concepts. In both cases it means a security. In all cases it is the work of the Lord upon us. That began when we came to faith. He has begun a good work in us, which He will perform until the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6). In practice until the day of our death, but the intention is obviously that the result of that good work will be revealed in the day of Christ. That is what it is aimed at. “Until” does not mean that He continues working at it all that time, but that the result of it is seen. “Until” and “to the end that” are always the same in the Bible. It is but one expression. With “until” we think it continues until a certain point in time, and with “to the end that” that a certain goal will be reached. In the Bible, however, “until” means just as much “to a certain purpose.”

Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool (Ps. 110:1). The common explanation of this verse is that Christ sits at the right hand of God until He returns to subject the world to Himself. From this reasoning also arose the thought that He now sits at God’s right hand and will later rise again and then come down here. That is a strange line of reasoning, for it would mean that He now sits on the highest throne and later comes down to sit on the throne of David, which yet indicates a lower position, a humiliation.

Why does He sit at the right hand of God? Because that is the position in which His enemies are set as His footstool. There are plenty of Scripture passages that say that His enemies are already His footstool and that all things are put under His feet. The point is that we do not yet see it, but it is already so. “Until” in the KJV therefore leads to wrong conclusions. Moreover, He remains on that throne for ever.

King Charles sits on the throne, but how many hours has he actually spent on that throne? Not very many, surely. Nevertheless he still sits on that throne. Even when he is actually sitting on it, it is still symbolic.

Eph. 1:13

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

That is the Holy Spirit who was promised in the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. That, then, is the goal. It must lead to that. The redemption of the purchased possession is of course the redemption of our body. We wait for the adoption as sons with patience, namely the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23–25). The Spirit is the advance payment on that, which implies that the redemption of our body is not merely the redemption of our body as such, but the transformation of the body into a habitation of God—clothed, or rather clothed upon, was the intention. That is to the praise of His glory.

Eph. 4:30

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

One can therefore grieve the Holy Spirit and thereby hinder the work of the Lord. In 1 Thess. 5:19 it says that we should not quench the Spirit.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption—so that we might be redeemed. Redemption, salvation, sanctification, or whatever one calls it, has three aspects: in spirit, in soul, and in body. The completion of it is of course in the body. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.

An earnest in relation to the future. He has sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. He gives us the Spirit, and thereby we are prepared for this very thing: that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

2 Corinthians 5: 6

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Always = in all circumstances.

These verses presuppose that we can already dwell at home in this body and thereby be absent from the Lord, or conversely, that we can dwell at home with the Lord and thereby be absent from our body. If you have two houses, you do not live in both at the same time. You can dwell in one, but then you are not in the other. You can live after the flesh or live after the Spirit. Paul says that one can choose this to a high degree. When Col. 3:1 says that we should seek those things which are above, it presupposes that we can also seek those things which are below. That, however, is not the intention. Moreover, if one wishes to be a friend of the world, then in practice one becomes an enemy of God. We ourselves can determine that; we can choose for ourselves. That requires some discipline. That is to say, we make a choice and hold to it. Unfortunately discipline is no longer instilled with one's mother's milk. On the other hand, there are people who say that if the Lord wants something from them, He will simply have to do it. The idea is that the Lord will be able to force it. Of course that is not how it works. Just as conversion is a conscious choice to believe, to choose whom one will serve, so it continues throughout the rest of our life. We should make a choice about what is important and what is not, what comes first and what is secondary. We ourselves are responsible for that. The time we spend striving for other things is time taken away from what we could devote to the Lord. It is not a matter of what one may or may not do.

There are no answers to be given to that. It is our personal responsibility before the Lord. Under certain circumstances one must consciously repeat that choice on occasion, or remind oneself of one's choice and hold to it. We do live in this body, but we do not belong here. Our home is with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 5: 7

(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)

There is nothing more for us to see. We are in this body; it has a rather blinding effect. That body is also a limitation and is regarded as a bond, a prison. We are imprisoned in this body. Nevertheless, one must learn to live with it. That is simply how it is. It is a limitation. That is why Paul can say: to depart and to be with Christ is far better (Phil. 1:23).

Only the superficial reader makes it out that departing concerns the dissolution of the physical remains, but it concerns the coherence of the body itself. Yet it is about Paul himself being out of that body and freed from the limitations of the body. The Bible regards the body as an instrument that one should present to God as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, yet by definition the body is a sinful body and imposes limitations on people.

We still dwell in this body and therefore we walk by faith. We must live by hearsay. That is faith: God tells us and we trust that it is so. Curiously, people in general are inclined to trust their eyes but not their ears. People say: "Seeing is believing."

We, however, walk by faith and must live by the Word of God and not by the things that are seen. Can nothing then be seen? Yes indeed, for this whole old creation testifies of God and His work in itself (Rom. 1:20). One can know God from creation.

Moreover, in the course of history God has performed various signs which were in themselves rather superfluous, yet He did perform them to illustrate His omnipotence. He can do that and is not subject to the laws of nature. Moreover, He performed those miracles to demonstrate that He not only announces something but is also able to do what He has promised. So He caused Israel to pass through the Red Sea, which He dried up for that purpose. That was not necessary in itself. The Israelites should simply have gone straight on, as the original route was, but the Lord told them to turn right, out of the wadi. Then the way came to a dead end at the Red Sea. The Lord then parted the waters. He could also have arranged for the Egyptians suddenly all to flee the next day. In the same way He once delivered Samaria.

God performs those miracles as a demonstration of His omnipotence. Where that has happened, it also ceases. That is to say, God in times past spoke unto the fathers at sundry times and in divers manners (Heb. 1:1), and that must be sufficient for us. We therefore walk by faith and not by sight.

If it was ever true that God does no miracles in history, then it is in our dispensation, for in our time—from the resurrection of Christ until His coming again—He would, in accordance with what He had promised or prophesied, hide His face entirely and shut the heavens. So that people would pray: O that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down... (Isa. 64:1). He hides His face, and blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed.

We are saved in hope, and hope that is seen is not hope, for if it is seen, why does one hope for it? It is not seen, and therefore we wait for it with patience. Through patience

one naturally arrives at: “For which cause we faint not.” God has said it. Nothing needs to be shown. Whatever has been shown happened in the past. It does not need to be repeated over and over again! They are historical facts.

We therefore walk by faith and not by sight.

Certain animals, such as bats and dolphins, have a sonar system. They emit sound and hear from the reflections of that sound where they are and where objects are. Bats fly at night and find insects in flight that evidently also produce echoes. In humans the ears are unfortunately underdeveloped. We must first see before we believe. Faith, however, is not by what one sees but by what one hears. We walk by faith and not by sight.

2 Corinthians 5: 8

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

That is precisely the opposite of verse 6. There it says that we are at home in the body and therefore absent from the Lord, but verse 8 says that we have more pleasure in being absent from the body and present with the Lord.

We have, as it were, two dwellings. We are now still in the one dwelling and will soon go to the other. We look forward to that.

2 Corinthians 5: 9

Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.

We are eager to be well-pleasing to Him. With that the matter is almost complete. These expressions come more or less from the beginning of chapter 3, where indeed it says that we have been made able ministers of the new covenant and that the intention is that we should walk pleasing to God and be a sweet savour of Christ in every place. We should know—or rather taste—the good and acceptable will of God. In all cases the point is that we should be taught throughout the whole of Scripture to walk indeed pleasing to God, namely in the good works which God hath before ordained. We do that with these things in mind: that we are absent from the Lord and still at home in this body. That, however, is a temporary matter. We are on the way to the promised land, to the inheritance. He will be the One who says to us: Well done, thou good and faithful servant...The judgement is not for our fellow men—believer or not—but for the Lord Himself. The judgement belongs to the High Priest, for we are the priests of the new covenant. The judgement belongs to Christ, for He is the Head of the Church. The judgment seat before which we must be manifested is of course the judgment seat of Christ. Sometimes a good deal is made of the difference between the throne of God (the great white throne of God—Rev. 20:11), namely the judgement over the whole old creation on the last day, and the judgement before the judgment seat of Christ. Such distinctions are artificially made. There is indeed a difference: first in time (more than a thousand years separate them) and second in category. The firstfruits of the new covenant and of a new creation are judged before the judgment seat of Christ. They are the first fruits of the harvest. On the last day, however, the entire harvest is judged. That is a difference.

Because this difference is not clear to some, since they do not believe in the thousand years at all, there is a need to make even more points of difference between the Church

before the judgment seat of Christ and the nations as such, the living and the dead, before the great white throne.

The throne, however, is the same, and the One who sits on the throne is also the same, for the great white throne is just as much the throne of Christ, who will subject the world to Himself. Moreover, all power in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, and furthermore the Father has committed all judgement unto the Son. Apart from that, if one were to see Someone sitting on the great white throne as vividly as possible, whom would one see? The One who is the image of God. And so we see Christ sitting on the great white throne after all.

Both thrones concern different circumstances. The manifestation of the Church before the judgment seat of Christ is an internal matter of the Church. Moreover, the question there is not whether anyone's name is written in the book of life, for whoever is not written in the book of life does not belong to the Church at all and therefore does not stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Such a person has no part nor lot in the rapture of the Church and therefore plays no role in it.

Because not all believers belong to the Church, this means that on the last day there will also be believers standing before the great white throne.

That there is a resurrection unto life and a resurrection unto condemnation means that there is one category that rises and lives on, and another category that rises and then still perishes. That is called the second death. That the resurrection of the Church concerns only believers does not mean that the resurrection on the last day concerns only unbelievers. By this reasoning the question arises: where have the Old Testament believers gone? For one cannot have them rise on the last day, so they must have part in the rapture of the Church, or even earlier. If that is the case, then the Church no longer exists as such, for then the Church is suddenly no longer a church of firstfruits. Then all the rights and privileges of the Church have been taken away. That is tragic. The Church is the Church because it concerns firstborn ones, firstfruits under the new covenant—not only in time but also in connection with the rights attached to that. Old Testament believers do not form part of the Church. If they did, how could the Church be a mystery in the Old Testament, and yet Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob be regarded as members of the Church and even as born again? Such theories appear in standard dispensational teaching. One should not make distinctions where they do not exist, but one should where they do.

In Matt. 25 it concerns the judgement of the then living, whereas in Revelation it concerns the judgement of the living and the dead on the last day. At the appearing before the judgment seat of Christ it concerns only the judgement of the Church.

In all our doing and not doing we have to do not only with fellow believers and opponents but first and foremost with the Lord Himself. That is stated in many places with great emphasis, and sometimes one reads right over it. The intention is that we should no longer live unto ourselves but live the life of Him who died for us and rose again. The importance of that is that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body. It is therefore not about what others think of us but what the Lord thinks of it. That is the only thing that really counts. In fact that makes life a good deal easier. One only has to reckon with One. In practice it proves somewhat more complicated, but in the end it is only about One—about the One whom we serve.

It is not for nothing that Paul said in 2 Cor. 3:6 that God has made us able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the spirit. He has committed that ministry to us. Therefore we faint not. We have renounced these hidden things of dishonesty. We walk not in craftiness, for all that has to do with reckoning with others. We faint not, for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Moreover we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Moreover we faint not, because we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Every time “for” appears, it is an explanation of “therefore we faint not.” We are therefore on the way to our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. The intention is namely that this mortal should be swallowed up of life and that the old should be replaced by the new. In 1 Cor. 15 it concerns an inheritance. 1 Cor. 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

An inheritance awaits us, for we are begotten again unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:3–4), yet as long as we are in the flesh and therefore mortal, we cannot inherit. Something must first change. That was also true for the Lord Jesus. He had first to die and rise from the dead. The same applies to us: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. This does not mean that flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom, for we have already entered that kingdom—not on the basis of flesh and blood, but because we are born again. Flesh and blood is therefore simply regarded as part of the kingdom. At the coming of Christ the whole surviving humanity (still in the flesh at that time) will indeed enter the kingdom. Yet it is not about entering but about inheriting the kingdom.

An inheritance is reserved for us in heaven, yet as long as we are still mortal and corruptible, we do not inherit incorruption. For what we inherit is incorruptible. And so...

1 Cor. 15:51

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; Paul always thinks immediately of the end of our dispensation, for he says that not all will sleep. Those who are still alive at the rapture of the Church will not first die. Moreover, death is overcome; we need say no more about it. One died for all, therefore all died. That is settled.

We shall all be changed,⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

Moment = atomos = indivisible. It therefore happens very quickly.

Sound = to produce a great noise. It is not about how that sound is produced but that it produces a great sound. Think of a clock striking. The trumpet therefore sounds, resounds with a great noise. The trumpet is the figure of the voice of God. He will speak with power.

The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we who have not slept shall be changed, for...⁵⁴ ...this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

Otherwise we shall never receive that inheritance. In other words, the Church as a collective is only placed in function on that occasion.

Put on = to clothe oneself with clothing.

That incorruption and immortality is put on as though it were a garment, just as we should put on the new man and put off the old man (Eph. 4:22–24).⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

That labour is not in vain. We shall be rewarded for it. That happens when our body is glorified. That evidently only happens definitively in the future, immediately preceding the coming again of Christ. It is not the case that if you die today and the rapture of the Church has not yet taken place, you receive your reward today. That comes only in the future. As long as it has not yet happened, everyone must wait for it. It is also the general biblical thought that when someone dies, he must wait until the last day before he is judged. We too must wait—not until the last day, but until the rapture of the Church.

2 Corinthians 5: 10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Receive = to receive reward according to labour; the payment.

Must = it is inevitable.

Appear = hidden things must be brought to light.

In Rom. 2 it says that the Lord will one day judge the secrets of men's hearts. We shall receive reward, and that reward expresses itself in the terms of the preceding verses. The term "judgment seat" occurs quite often in the Bible. Literally the word means "a step" or "a footstep." It is translated that way once, in Acts 7:5: Abraham had no inheritance in the promised land, no, not so much as to set his foot on. The Greek word is *bēma*. In practice the word is described as a wooden chair. A chair is a platform on which one can sometimes sit but also stand. We then call it a podium or a stage. Bells hang in a bell tower, and ministers stand in a pulpit. In former times the judge had a wooden elevation, and from that raised position judgement was pronounced. The members of the court thus look down on the accused. It is the expression of the high position the judge occupies.

In the New Testament the concept occurs twelve times:

- The judgment seat of Pilate (Matt. 27:19; John 19:13);
- The judgment seat of Herod, king of the Jews. While he sat upon the judgment seat he died. That meant the end of his power (Acts 12:21);
- The judgment seat of Gallio (Acts 18:12, 16, 17);
- The judgment seat of Festus (Acts 25:17);
- The judgment seat of Caesar (Acts 25:10);
- The judgment seats in Jas. 2:6—that is only in the KJV, for it does not say judgment seats but *kritērion*—the court;
- The judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10);
- And gave him no inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on (Acts 7:5).

We shall all be set before the judgment seat of Christ, while in 2 Cor. 5 it says that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It makes no difference; in both cases it means that it is inevitable. It will happen. As an addition it says in Rom. 14:12: So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

Give account = there will be a reckoning. In Heb. 4:13 it says: with whom we have to do. The same is there: with whom we have to reckon. We shall indeed all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but the judgement is for each one individually. This means that one can no longer hide behind anything. It is an individual and personal matter.

In Rom. 14 it continues that we should no longer judge one another and would do better not to put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in our brother's way. In 2 Cor. 5 it continues that henceforth we know no man after the flesh. We should be conscious that in our relations with one another we act not as servants of one another but as servants of Christ. It is not about what the reactions and consequences here on earth are of our actions, but what the consequence of our actions will be hereafter before the judgment seat of Christ.

The idea of the judgment seat of Christ is discussed in quite a number of places. That is logical too, for it is essential for our practical life.

In 1 Cor. 3 it speaks of building the Church as upon a foundation. No other foundation can any man lay. On that foundation one should build. In that connection it says...

1 Cor. 3:12

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

14 If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.

15 If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. What is still hidden here and cannot be manifested will there be made manifest. The day shall declare it. The day in the sense of the judgement. That is the day of Christ. He will judge. The day brings light and the day will therefore manifest it, bring it to light.

Everything will, so to speak, be thrown into the fire. All combustible materials will burn. Nothing will remain of them. What remains is gold, silver, and precious stones. Those are noble materials. They are so called because they are fire-resistant.

Here it is black and white. Either it burns or it does not burn. In reality of course part will burn and part will remain. Through what burns one suffers loss, but one does not lose eternal life.

In 2 Cor. 5 it is called: that every one may receive according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.

What is good and what is bad? People have probably absolutised those concepts on the basis of the first chapters of Genesis. Evil has therefore become sin in the most absolute sense of the term. That is not what it is. Good is what was desirable, and evil is what was not desirable. The evil is building with wood, hay, and stubble. Good is building with gold, silver, and precious stones.

The good works of the believer are those works that proceed from faith. They are also called the works of faith. Those works do not proceed from the natural man as such. By "proceed" is not meant that they are performed through this body—for they are performed through the body in any case—but rather the origin of those works. What was the motivation?

The evil works are therefore the works that proceed from unbelief. They may also be called wicked works, although by ordinary human standards those wicked works are often not particularly wicked at all. They can be very well-intentioned.

The good is service to God under the new covenant. God has made us able to be ministers of the new covenant. The works that proceed from that, done with patience, are the good works. All else is the evil works.

One might therefore receive reward for the good and punishment for the evil. The question then naturally arises what is meant by punishment. One may receive reward, reduced reward, or no reward at all. There is nothing worse than that. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. He therefore stands empty-handed. In 2 Cor. 5 it is said that one then stands without a shirt, naked. That may seem not so bad. One can miss one's reward. Some people say they are quite content to be saved and that the reward is not really necessary. A small corner in heaven is enough for them. It does not seem so serious. Yet there are quite a number of Scripture passages that are far from reassuring. Indeed, they speak of this judgement in the strongest possible terms. It is said that one may think lightly of it, but may bitterly regret it.

It is not for nothing that at the beginning of both Corinthian epistles we find this solemn warning, although here it is still described rather lightly. Nevertheless Paul says: "We are confident, knowing that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The next verse says: Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord... (2 Cor. 5:11). It does therefore inspire some fear. Added to that is the general biblical thought that for us as individual believers a race is set before us, an individual race, with corresponding reward or crown. Yet that crown can be lost. It is therefore not presented as though one can build up a certain reward, but rather the opposite: one can lose it.

2 John 1:8

Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.

Implying that one can lose one's reward. That is also logical. From ancient times people were hired for a certain work. The reward for it was fixed in advance. If one had not done the work, or not done it well, one naturally did not receive one's full reward. There is therefore, even with the Lord, a kind of employment contract in advance. For He has set before one a race.

In Heb. 12:6 it says that we shall be appointed as sons (receiveth = appoints). Sonship concerns inheritance rights. Because of that inheritance right we should run the race that is set before us (verse 1). Along the way we are chastened, or rather disciplined, so that we might be partakers of His holiness. Discipline does not seem to be a matter of joy. Then it says...

Heb. 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

15 Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

Pursuing peace concerns the relationship between believers among themselves.

Wherever the law is preached there is automatically a failing of the grace of God.¹⁶ Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Fornication = unfaithfulness.

A profane person = one who does not serve God and is therefore unfaithful.

We are called to adoption as sons; Esau too, but he sold his birthright. That right can therefore be forfeited.

The Church as a whole cannot lose its birthright—at least not collectively. Within the Church, however, it can happen. For many that seems difficult to grasp. All Israel was a people of firstborn ones. That does not alter the fact that within Israel there was again distinction. Within Israel the birthright was specifically given to the tribe of Ephraim. The kingship was specifically given to the tribe of Judah and the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. Within the tribe of Levi it was again the Aaronites who became priests. The others were simply Levites and subordinate to the priests. They served the priests, and together they formed the priestly tribe, while in fact all Israel is a priestly people. In the Church it works exactly the same way. The Church is a priestly people and called to adoption as sons, yet what becomes of the individual members of the Church is another matter. Within the Church there is distinction, just as there was distinction within Israel. After all, not all people are equal, not all people have the same rights, and not all people receive the same little crown.

Esau lost his birthright. We should not follow his example, for...

Heb. 12:17

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Then it was too late, and he bitterly regretted it.

In the following verses it says that we are a church of firstborn ones, and therefore with birthright. Then it continues...

Heb 12:25

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Him that speaketh = Christ.

We should listen to Him.

If they = those in Old Testament times.

The judgement upon Esau, the judgement upon Israel in connection with the old covenant, is cited here as an example for the judgement upon the Church at our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. It is to be feared that only a small portion of all church members will ever receive a full reward. It is also to be feared that a large part of the Church will receive no reward at all. There is always a believing remnant, a minority. There are probably many children of God, but how many children of God allow themselves to be disciplined and instructed and are willing to run the race that God has

set before them? Most children of God hope that God is interested in the race they have set before themselves and that God will help them in it.

He will yet once more shake = one day those perishable things will definitively pass away.

We receive an immovable and imperishable kingdom. We shall not only enter that kingdom but shall also inherit it—at least that is the intention. Let us therefore hold fast the grace and not fail of it, whereby we may serve God acceptably.

May and can are the same here.

We may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. We should bear fruit unto God.

Let us hold fast the grace, for...

Heb. 12:29

For our God is a consuming fire.

This is not said in relation to an ungodly world but in relation to the Church, to children of God. Our God is a consuming fire. Our works will burn. Our life after the flesh will burn. What have all those years produced? Nothing, except shame. That remains visible for years to come. That really cannot be changed any more. Some think that when we are with the Lord hereafter we shall still receive a kind of crash course and everything will yet come right, inspired by that philosophy of equality—that we must all become equal, because otherwise we cannot be happy. Some will then have to make up lost ground. The Bible says that this cannot be. This is the final reckoning, and that is it, for our God is a consuming fire.

Heb. 12:25 should be laid alongside the beginning of Hebrews, for the epistle ends as it began.

Heb. 1:1

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son...2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

2 For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward;

3 How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him;

4 God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if those to whom God spoke through the prophets under the old covenant did not escape, how shall we escape if we pay no heed to the Son who now speaks to us?

We must give the more earnest heed to what is spoken by Him and from Him, for He is the One who speaks to us. We have to do with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Son—not merely with His staff. Therefore we must hold even more than the fathers to what has been heard, lest at any time we let it slip. For if the word spoken by messengers (it says angels, but they are messengers = the prophets of Heb. 1:1) was stedfast, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord Himself (for church truth was first proclaimed by the Lord Himself, the Son), and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him (the disciples); God also bearing

witness from His heavenly position, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will—in the days of those who literally heard the Lord Jesus. First the Lord Jesus, then the disciples, and while the disciples, who had become apostles, preached, it was God who bore witness by signs and wonders and so forth.

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Heb. 6:4

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

7 For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God:

8 But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

What is impossible? To renew again unto repentance. Whom can we not renew unto repentance? Those who were once enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift (experienced it, therefore) and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come and fall away. That concerns born-again people. They know the new life but nevertheless let it go. For example because they have come to love the present world. They are indeed children of God, for one cannot undo that. One cannot undo one's descent. They are indeed children of God, but nothing comes of their inheritance. They have exchanged it for a morsel of meat, as Esau did. Paul says that he can have no regard for such people. Whatever he tells them, they know it—not only doctrinally but also from experience. If they then still say in practice that they will have none of it, he can do nothing more about it.

They fall away and as it were crucify the Son of God afresh. At any rate they put Him to an open shame. That is to say, in practice they deny His crucifixion and so it must as it were happen again. They are enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18). For they do not in practice wish to accept that they are dead to the world, to sin, and to the law, and therefore if they wish to love the world they are enemies of Christ.

Of these believers it is said that they are as thorns and briers, rejected and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned. Nevertheless they themselves shall be saved, yet so as by fire. It is therefore a solemn warning.

Of course these verses have been reasoned away by saying that they do not concern born-again people. Yet they most certainly do. They still choose the world and fulfil the will of the flesh and choose to run a different race from the one the Lord has set before them.

Heb. 10:23

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) We must hold fast to what has been spoken.

24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: That is running that race.

25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together is the same as failing of the grace in Heb. 12:15.

The assembling of ourselves together has been reduced to our self-appointed local meetings, with hopes of large attendance figures. People are then urged above all to attend those meetings, for surely we should not forsake our assembling together! Yet that assembling together is our assembling together before the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). If one forsakes that assembling, one fails of the grace.

The day that approaches is not the day on which we have planned our meeting, but it is still that day—the day of Christ. For the judgement is coming.²⁶ For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, This is the evil of 2 Cor. 5.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. Then there is nothing more to be done. What then remains?

Heb.10:27

But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord...Those adversaries are believers, born-again people. Most opposition to the preaching of the gospel and biblical truth comes from Christians, because they do not wish to draw near to the throne of grace, because they dislike the assembling together, which they have therefore replaced with their own local meeting and their own local church building—even if it is sometimes called the meeting hall.

They are your brethren, but they are your adversaries.

Heb.10:28

He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

One can grieve Him, quench Him, but also do despite unto Him.

If under Moses' law one already died without mercy, how much heavier punishment will one receive as a child of God who nevertheless rejects the Word of God? Life imprisonment seems a heavier penalty than the death penalty. As believers we receive life imprisonment. One bears for life the shame of being found unclothed, naked. One must live with that. For it will not be otherwise.

That is the solemn warning we receive in such Scripture passages. Precisely in the epistle to the Hebrews it is repeatedly brought forward. In this epistle it is explained that we live under the new covenant, with a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, seated upon the throne of grace.

It is said that Hebrews is the most difficult epistle in the New Testament. That is probably chiefly because people are always inclined to turn for practical life to the Mosaic law and thereby to the Levitical priesthood and the dominion of the law. That is the evil, and everything that takes place within that framework and under that heading forms part of wood, hay, and stubble. It will burn. Very solemn words indeed!

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That does not alter the fact that there are also many Scripture passages in which this is viewed as something positive and as a blessed hope. That is indeed the normal thought for the believer. We look for

the blessed hope, namely the appearing of the glory. For we know that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. It should be a positive truth. We should rejoice that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad. It is positive, yet at the same time it is accompanied by a solemn warning to serve Him, to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, or rather not to forsake our assembling together, or rather to enter into the sanctuary by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us. In all those Scripture passages it concerns exactly the same thing. We draw near to Him and yield our members as instruments of righteousness and our bodies as a holy, living, acceptable sacrifice unto God. The reconciliation through Christ

2 Corinthians 5: 11

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. Then = from what has been set forth so far it follows...Now follows the conclusion of the foregoing.

Paul's remark that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ at the very least summarises the two preceding pages. It may be that a person is born again and receives new and imperishable life by coming to faith, yet once we are born again we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. In short, this earthly habitation should be used by God, after which the result of that—at least for us—will be manifested in that other habitation which is from heaven. It does not say here when that is. Only that if our earthly house were dissolved, we have a building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The timing of that is not mentioned. We must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That is the same occasion. Hence this section begins and ends with the same line of thought. That figure of speech is called an inclusio.

The discussion always concerns when that appearing before the judgment seat of Christ will be: before the great tribulation, before the seventieth week of Daniel, or before the thousand-year kingdom. Paul does not go into that here. It concerns the phenomenon as such. That should first of all impress itself upon us.

We should not conform to the expectations of others but to what the Lord expects of us. Although in a certain sense that is the same for each of us, in practice it is nevertheless different for each of us. There is a good reason for that, for people are different, believers too. They have different positions, as set forth in 1 Cor. 12–14. In Eph. 4 it says that we all form part of one body. It is one Spirit, one God, one Lord, who gives the one and the other, yet He gives differently to each one of us.

The concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity lie at the foundation of our Western culture, yet all three are utterly wrong. Those concepts were introduced with the use of the guillotine. If one did not agree, one's head came off. Those who were clearly different were made a head shorter. That is our world, our culture of today.

Yet all people are not equal, all believers are not equal. People have different positions on the basis of their different abilities, to each according to his several ability. Where those things are denied, it means the downfall of society.

Every person bears personal responsibility. It is not about the collective but about the individual. Individuals together form a collective. That is how we make music as well.

One person can play for himself, another for himself, and then we bring it together. Together it becomes something—or it does not. There you find the compromise between individualism and the communal. You do something jointly, and therefore you must adapt to one another. Nevertheless, it begins with each one individually being able to do something; otherwise you can achieve nothing together either. Together we are strong. That may be so, but only if each one is strong individually. If it is all nothing, then $0 + 0 \times 0$ still equals 0.

That is what these chapters—and indeed the rest of the epistle—are about. Paul speaks of this more here than in any other epistle. He even sets himself forward as an example. Paul says: “Whatever you do, know this: it concerns me deeply and grieves me, but I simply carry on, for I have my ministry.”

Not all people are equal, for Paul was an apostle and the Corinthians were not. That is why he says: “Whatever you do, I am going to carry on with this.” It is required of the stewards of the mysteries of God that they be found faithful. Paul therefore has no interest in human judgement, for it is God who judges him.

In the following section Paul speaks primarily about himself and about Timothy. He writes in the “we” form: we this and we that. For the moment he does not yet include the Corinthians in it. He sets himself forward as an example, and where he can do so it also means that they are not all equal. One goes before and another follows. That is a normal situation—not only in the Church but in the world as well, even though the French disagreed. The background to that is that people do not wish to bear personal responsibility. No one wants to stick his neck out any more. Those who did had their heads chopped off. People today who do not wish to bear their responsibility hand it over to the State. Who is the State? No one. When a politician takes responsibility, he steps down. In doing so he precisely does not take his responsibility. If you take your responsibility, you do not walk away.

We believers—however different our positions in the Church may be—must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. It is not about what people—brothers and sisters—think of it, but whether we are faithful to the Lord. God has made us able to be ministers of the new covenant and not of the old covenant. This means that all who preach the law wholly or in part are thereby unfaithful to the Lord and thus do evil. They propagate the law, wholly or in part, in whatever form. The Bible is never really clear about which law that is. Sometimes it is pretended that the Jewish law is the law, while at other times it is said that the Jewish law is certainly not the same as the law of Moses. Yet the Lord held that against His contemporaries. The Lord Jesus said of them that they had made their own laws so as not to have to obey the law of Moses. Nevertheless that distinction is usually not made, for the simple reason that law is law, whatever law it may be. We are delivered from every form of law. It is a misunderstanding to think that one can please God by law. Granted, the law of the Lord is holy, and just, and good (Rom. 7:12), yet it is weak and unprofitable for the purpose intended (Heb. 7:18).

Apart from that, law is useful for any society. The great thinkers of mankind have concluded that rules are still needed. Can you govern a country with them? More or less. You can keep traffic reasonably well regulated with them. But if you keep all those laws scrupulously, do you then go to heaven or something? No, not that. If you keep the Ten Commandments neatly, are you then saved? No, for there were far more than ten commandments, quite apart from the question whether one could keep them at all.

Law does not work. One need have nothing against the law, but it is not the way to God. That is why we are delivered from it, in whatever form. We have other standards. Our standard is the Word of God, which makes promises to us that we should accept and live from. That is living by faith; being faithful to the Lord. That too is what these chapters are about. It is not faithfulness to the law—on the contrary—but faithfulness to the new covenant. We have therefore been made able to be ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter (the old covenant) but of the spirit, for the letter (the law), engraven in stones, was a ministration of death. But the spirit gives life. Of that we have become ministers.

Moreover, the universal priesthood of the believer is a priesthood under the leadership of—and therefore in subjection and obedience to—the High Priest, to Christ, after the order of Melchisedec and not after the order of Aaron. Those two priesthoods do not exist side by side, even though many would like us to believe they do. They do not wish to let go of the law because otherwise they can exercise no power. That law helps them to accuse others and thereby exalt themselves above others. Nowhere is there so much gossip as in circles where people live heavily under the law.

We, however, do not live under the law but under the Spirit, under the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec.

In Heb. 7 it says that there was no question of a new priesthood alongside the old, but that the two are incompatible. If therefore there is spoken of a priesthood after the order of Melchisedec and it has come into operation, that means not only a change of priesthood but also of law—that is, of covenant and therefore also of teaching. It is not left in the middle what it concerns, for it is then explained at length, saying that the law with its Aaronic priesthood is weak and unprofitable. Those words cannot be misunderstood, though of course they can be ignored. That is the most commonly applied trick for introducing all sorts of teachings within Christendom. One simply ignores large parts of the Bible. One has a text here and there with which one fiddles about and leaves all other relevant Scripture passages out of consideration. That is of course also convenient, for most Christians have no idea what is in the Bible and therefore in practice leave the whole Bible out of consideration.

Strong words? They are actually not nearly strong enough. We should realise that, for we shall soon stand before the Lord. He pays no attention to outward things, to what has all happened and what has all been said and how people have all reacted. That is what is before the eyes and what occupies man. He can hardly do otherwise. But the Lord looks on the heart. He will bring to light the hidden things of the heart (Rom. 2:16). The things hidden in the heart that in any case cannot come out. If they do come out, they are misinterpreted. People just do things, but before the Lord one cannot get away with that. One can say it was with good intentions, but what was good about it? Did it seek the honour of the Lord? Did it seek service under the new covenant? One can spin a fine story about that and even deceive oneself, but before the Lord one cannot do it. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

As explained at length above, there is indeed a judgement upon the believers of the Church. Hence the terror of the Lord. One should not reason away the statements about it by saying they concern non-regenerate people. They concern precisely regenerate people—those who have tasted the powers of the world to come, and so forth.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. We set men in motion. To faith = as far as is known, that whole expression is not there. Perhaps in some manuscripts it is. It makes little difference, for what Paul means is clear enough from this passage. For he speaks of his ministry, whereby people are set in motion. They are driven somewhere. Where to should also be clear: to Christ.

In verse 20 Paul says: Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

And so the circle is complete again. God has committed unto us the word of reconciliation, and therefore we are ambassadors for Christ. Journalists know exactly how it works. When a politician has said something that attracts criticism, the journalist gets the blame. Then the bringer of the message gets the blame—the postman. People shift it off, and then the messenger is punished. That is why the prophets in Israel were persecuted and killed. People pretended the prophets were responsible for what they told, although they were only the messengers: “Thus saith the Lord...” Those were those arrogant men who meddled in everything, completely against general public opinion and against everything that was politically correct.

For example, things were going prosperously under the ten tribes of Israel, but the Lord sent a prophet from Judah (Micah), who told them one thing and another in the name of the Lord. Afterwards he was politely but urgently requested to take his prophecies somewhere else—perhaps to his own tribe—for they were not pleased with them. Moreover, Micah was just an ordinary farmer, and he meddles in politics and religious leaders. In any case he was only the postman, in the sense that the message was delivered orally. Perhaps he also used his own choice of words. Nevertheless the content of his message was what the Lord said. So it was with all those prophets. So it still is in our days. If someone has the heart to preach the Word of God, things usually do not end well for him.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord... something quite different awaits us. At least if we know our future—which is incidentally characteristic of faith. Faith is trust in the Word of God, and the Word of God by definition speaks of the future. Hence faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). That is to say, we live by faith and of course we believe in Christ and in the future, but if one must become more concrete, then we believe that we are children of God, out of the riches of God's grace, and that we as firstfruits are called to adoption as sons, to share in the inheritance of Christ. That is where we are heading, as children of the King. That we believe, and that is quite different from believing that there is Someone up in heaven who, if we just give a nudge, does what we ask of Him—or rather we put Him under pressure and dictate to Him. The Bible teaches no such thing in any way. Heathenism teaches that one can appease the idols by serving them or bringing sacrifices or whatever. That is not the case with us. We have a Lord who has drawn us out of a dark world. He has given us new life and thereby made us able to serve Him. What then is our job description? The Lord said: “Occupy till I come. Goodbye.” For we walk by faith, not by sight. That is the essence of the situation.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men—and thereby to the Lord and to the new covenant—and are made manifest unto God.

We are made manifest unto God. “Are” is in the present tense. That means it continues. It began in the past and still continues. Otherwise it would be: were made manifest.

We are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. The point is that Paul is indeed exposed to the criticism of the Corinthians—which is bad enough in itself—but he should rather be the example for the Corinthians to be followed and thereby made manifest. That is why in the following chapters he goes into his own circumstances of life, his persecutions and afflictions, his experience of one thing and another as well. They are the things for which he is blamed outwardly, but he says they do not really know what is going on. Moreover, what do those Corinthians know about the responsibility of—in this case—an apostle? And so he tells them.

He is made manifest unto God; the Lord knows how it is. You know, we do not handle the Word of God deceitfully, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ (2 Cor. 2:17). Not as your lord and master, not as your religious or ecclesiastical leader, not as the elder of the church, but as your servants, as a servant of Christ and a servant of the church. That is why Paul is despised and persecuted. That is the real situation.

Therefore I am made manifest unto God and hope to be made manifest in your consciences—probably vain hope. Therefore it makes little sense to dwell on it at length. So it remains to this day. If one does not consciously make that transition from an old world to a new, from the old covenant to the new covenant, from darkness to light, and does not consciously choose to serve the Lord and no one else in His place or beside Him (after all, one cannot serve two masters), if one does not consciously do these things, then one will never—never—understand them.

As long as one is busy building a denomination, local or worldwide, one will never understand these things. For that reason the term “church building” is also very dangerous. Of course it exists, but the Word of God should be ministered, and then He builds His church. We should not meddle in that. Then one does not need that word (church building) at all. It does not occur in the Bible either—at least certainly not in the way we know that word, namely in the way it is used in practice. We do not focus on church building but on the Lord and on His Word. We come only to hear the Word of God and then to search whether these things are so. We accept it as the Word of God, and that does its work in us. That happens differently in each one of us, and therefore we should have no criticism of that. It says the Word does not return void—at least if it is the Word of God.

I trust also to be made manifest in your consciences—or to become so, perhaps one day. If it is hope, it must still happen. He says the Lord knows how it is, but they do not yet know, and he hopes that it may yet happen one day. After that follow some more chapters, but they are not very encouraging.

2 Corinthians 5: 12

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

We live in such a world in which people glory in appearance. Appearance is the outside, the surface. Darkness was upon the face of the deep (Gen. 1:2). In reality it says there was darkness upon the face of the deep—over the surface. The face of the Lord is the appearing of the Lord. When Moses sees God, he sees the back parts of God, the outside (Exod. 33:23). God Himself cannot be seen, for God is Spirit. When God showed

Himself in the Old Testament, Jehovah appeared. When He shows Himself under the new covenant, Christ appears, who is the express image of God's person.

In our world today only the outside counts. One of the causes of the downfall of Western culture is that people focus on results—first of all financial. That is the curse of capitalism. Not that there is anything good to be said about socialism either. In the end it is all about the money. Moreover, we live in a democracy. Truth can be voted on. The majority rules, and that is then the truth. As if that were decisive. The Bible says that the majority by definition follows evil, and therefore one should not follow the majority in evil. That of course does not mean one should follow the minority in evil either.

We preach the new covenant, the liberty we have in Christ. We preach that we do not live under the law but under grace and that it is not about the here and now but about the there and then. Yet there is no demand for that message, so one should stop it. That is foolishness! But that is the world we live in. It is no longer about the content, about the truth, but about the ratings, so to speak. Of course there is nothing wrong with outward things in themselves, but to have to make do with only the outside is terribly poor.

Outward things only gain value when there is also content. Nowadays we are kept sweet with only the outside, only packaging. There is no content any more. Politicians often want a substantive discussion, but there is no substance at all. What do they want to talk about then? One should not shout: "Fire, fire, fire," for then all the people are alarmed. By the time they realise it themselves it is of course too late.

What about a God whom we know by hearing and by the Word? Instead, little images were made, or people philosophise (that is just as much making an image) and then discuss it: "What a beautiful philosophy." The great thinkers of mankind are just as much fantasists as the artists.

They glory in appearance and not in heart. People blame you for what you do and do not do, but they are not interested in your heart, in your experience. For they can do nothing with that. Hence preaching of experience is also nonsense. No one benefits from that, for experience is different for each of us. What we all benefit from is the knowledge of the truth and faith in the truth—in Christ, who is the Truth, because He reveals to us the truth of God and because He has given form to it in His ministry, in the past but just as much in the present. Those are invisible, unseen things, but from them we live. We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18). All those visible things pass away.

For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, and not in heart.

Paul does not commend himself again, although it may seem so, so that we are quite sure that Paul here sets himself forward as an example.

Paul himself is an example to us that one should not glory in appearance. For he does not do so either. It is not about outward but about inward things. Later we read that outwardly things did not exactly go well for Paul either. The Corinthians concluded from that that he was therefore no true apostle. Everything was against him. Moreover, he was no true apostle because he also worked to provide for his own needs. He did this work only in his spare time. Paul says of that that they only look at the outward and that is not what it is about. It concerns the inward things, the spiritual things. Moreover we

must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Therefore one thing: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark (Phil. 3:14). We should be followers of Paul. You can decide for yourself, but Paul has warned you.

2 Corinthians 5: 13

For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.

Paul was regarded as beside himself, out of his mind. It is another expression for someone who is not quite right. He was maladjusted, an antisocial type. He did not join in with everyone and went his own way. He did not adapt and did not do what they wanted. He did not meet their expectations. Then one is no good and does not track properly.

Paul may be seen that way by the Corinthians, but he says he is so to God, because he is in the service of God.

Paul is sober for the sake of the Corinthians. He adapted outwardly. Then he becomes to the Jews as a Jew, to the Greeks as a Greek, and so forth. Those were all outward things, but that is not what it is about. He did not preach those either. It concerns spiritual things: the Word of God, the promises of God, the work of God, which simply does not happen in public and therefore cannot be measured outwardly either.

2 Corinthians 5: 14

For the love of Christ constraineth us;

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men, for the love of Christ constraineth us.

Paul mentions two things that motivate him not to faint in his faithfulness to the Lord. On the one hand the terror of the Lord and on the other hand the love of the Lord. The terror of the Lord clearly points back to our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ. That Lord is therefore Christ. So He is named in verse 14 as well.

Both the terror and the love are arguments for Paul's not fainting.

There is now some discussion about verse 14 and incidentally also about verse 11. That is to be expected, for in general very little is known within Christendom about the work that the Lord would do on, in, and through the Christian. People are chiefly occupied with the question how one becomes a Christian and what that actually is; whether or not one goes to heaven and what one must do for it. Achieving that is usually shifted forward to the deathbed. That it can be achieved earlier escapes many, and therefore also that God does a work on and in the believer himself. One therefore need not pay too much attention to the discussions about these verses. From the context it is clear enough what it concerns anyway.

It is very simple: Paul says that we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ and that he does not want to stand there naked. The other is that the love of Christ constrains him, after which he says that one died for all, so that one can with a clear conscience lay this verse alongside Rom. 5:8, where it says that God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, enemies, unrighteous, and without strength, Christ died for us. God establishes, demonstrates, sets His love toward us firm by Christ's dying for us. If one were conscious of that and lived from it, that would be a tremendous motivation for what follows: that we who have thereby been saved and are

therefore dead to the flesh, now that we have received new life from Him, should indeed set that life in His service. That is the short summary of what stands further here. Yet it begins with that love of God. We could also have read Eph. 2:

Eph. 2:4

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; And so forth.

That is that love of God. That should constrain us, drive us, motivate us, urge us to...The love of Christ constraineth us. How so?

2 Corinthians 5: 15

For we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

We thus judge = we judge, we consider. In short, we regard the matter as follows: that if one died for all (and God commendeth His love toward us, that Christ died for all), then were all dead. This means that man is placed outside communion with God. He is accounted dead (not God, but man). Not because he really is, but judicially he is, according to right. One can therefore say that people have lost all their rights and duties toward God.

The idea that we are children of God by nature is not entirely unbiblical, because we are creations of God. That may be so, but God has long since settled accounts with that. He has, so to speak, written us off. He has declared us dead on legal grounds, through the One who was willing to stand in our place. He had the right of redemption. Others did not, but He did. He had the highest rights. Not all people are equal, remember? He died for all, and therefore all died—at least according to God's standards and according to God's right. In practice God holds to that right.

Domela Nieuwenhuis, for example, was condemned to death in absentia and came years later to collect his inheritance. He did not receive it, because he no longer existed. He had been executed years before—not in practice, but in a legal sense yes. He could, so to speak, have driven through a red light without receiving a fine. He probably no longer had to pay tax either. He was legally dead. That is the position of the natural man. You may try your best for God, but you do not exist at all. You do exist, but without rights and without obligations.

The love of Christ constraineth us. For we judge thus: that if one died for all (as the outworking of that love of God), then all men are dead. And therefore I have to do with dead people. What then do you preach? That one can yet receive life through faith in Him whom God raised from the dead. That is why the resurrection of Christ is the glad tidings. Of course something had to precede it, but it is just as with offering: an offering is only an offering once it lies on the altar. Before it lies on the altar, there is at most slaughter—if it concerns bloody offerings at least. That is not called an altar but a slaughter-place. What comes to the slaughter-place is not by definition an offering. What comes to the altar is, afterwards. In the same way crucifixion and resurrection are inseparably connected, yet the glad tidings are truly the preaching of the risen Christ, of

Him who is the Firstborn of a new creation. He was that also in the days of His flesh, but the glad tidings concern Him who now is the Firstborn of a new creation.

He died for all, that (and now comes the purpose) they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Who are those who live? Those who afterwards yet received life. For God has begotten us who believe again by the resurrection of Christ unto a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3). That is what this is about too: that living hope in Christ, the reward we are to receive. For that purpose we should devote the life we have received to Him. Where that life is placed in this old earthen vessel, it means that this old earthen vessel is thereby sanctified. That is why we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Rom. 12:1). Christ died for all, but lives for believers. We who believe therefore logically—according to the intention—live for Him. We are made alive unto God, that we should not henceforth serve sin, for we are dead to sin but alive unto God. Therefore we are servants (slaves) of Christ

He died for all, that those who live should no longer live their own life but live for Him who died for them and rose again—for Christ therefore. We should therefore no longer live our own life but the life of Christ.

In the natural man it is so that in the practice of our life—at least to a certain extent—we live for ourselves. Our whole environment naturally does everything possible to prevent that. Law was invented to prevent people from living for themselves. One must live according to the rules. If one does not keep them, one is, so to speak, caught on camera. There is too little respect for the individual. Nevertheless, when a child is born, we soon notice afterwards what is in that child. That character soon comes to the surface. Cynically speaking, upbringing then aims to suppress it. If upbringing has succeeded somewhat, one does not even know who that child is. It has not had the chance to show it. Then the so-called anti-authoritarian upbringing was devised, after which it became complete chaos. That does not work either.

That is the human dilemma: to what extent can one live one's own life, and to what extent is that limited by those around and by circumstances? In any case a person should live his own life. He lives for himself. When is someone happy? The answer is: when he is able to be sufficiently himself. That is the ideal of the natural man, and therefore it is about being able to live one's own life.

For us as children of God, however, it applies that we should not live ourselves but Christ.

That life of Christ is placed in our earthen vessel. What goes into the vessel takes the form of the vessel. Indeed, it not only takes the form of the vessel but thereby also determines the amount, the measure. One vessel is large, another small. Yet it is not about how large the vessel is, but whether it is full. That is God's standard. That is why it is called: being filled with... How much is then in it is not the point.

The life of Christ in us takes forms determined by who we ourselves are. We can do nothing about that. What we can do something about is the question to what extent we give Christ room in our life. To what extent we can set aside our own old life and make it subordinate to the life of Christ in us. In Matt. 25 it says that talents are given: to one so many talents, to another so many, to every man according to his several ability. The ability of people is therefore different. According to their ability they also received talents—in the biblical sense of responsibilities. There is no doubt that Paul, even before he came to faith, was a man of considerable abilities. Yet those were misused. It

was a powerful horse, but it was harnessed to the wrong cart. Moreover it was a good horse and allowed it meekly. He had received proper education, achieved good marks. He had learned much, but was misled. Nevertheless he was undoubtedly placed by God in this apostolic office on the basis of the abilities he had used before. He was a driven man and stood for what he believed, for what he held to be true, and in practice was willing to give up everything to achieve the ideal—indeed in the service of God. He did not know that God. That is why in Athens he had quite a lot to say about the unknown God—the God he originally did not know either.

When he says that he counted them but loss for Christ's sake, he is not speaking of his ability, education, character, and all such things, but of what his vessel had been filled with. He sets that aside. He prefers something else, something that has real value. That is his responsibility, which he discusses further in later chapters. Nevertheless that is also our responsibility.

We should therefore no longer live our own life but Christ's life. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me (Gal. 2:20). The consequence of that is...

2 Corinthians 5: 16

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

On the basis of the foregoing, our fellowship—the bond we have—is no longer determined by outward things, for what binds us does not consist of outward things. Both in the world and in Christendom people focus attention on outward things to promote unity—among people in general and among believers. For that purpose they have invented games like shuffleboard, and so we go for an evening of shuffleboard to promote mutual understanding and mutual trust. Together this and together that, for that promotes our fellowship. Perhaps that is so, but it is very poor. That is at most outward and therefore aimed very low.

Yet here it says that henceforth we know no man after the flesh. Flesh is the visible, outward things that we should precisely not regard (2 Cor. 4:18). It is not about what we know of one another but that we know one another. That is the practical experience of the unity that exists. That is not based on the flesh. Indeed, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Has it ever struck you that neither in Acts nor in the New Testament epistles is ever pointed to a particular event from the life of the Lord Jesus? That does not occur. We know Him no more after the flesh.

Understand rightly: we must be acquainted with the history, which moreover is highly prophetic. The Bible simply speaks of the future, even when it is described as history. The four Gospels acquaint us with the life of the Lord Jesus. John says it is rather summary, but sufficient. If everything had to be recorded, the world itself could not contain the books (John 21:25). It remains with those four Gospels. Then we see Jesus (that is Jesus after the flesh) crowned with glory and honour. That is what we focus on. That is also the content of the preaching.

Insofar as we should be followers of the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk, it means that like Him we should live by faith and be faithful to the Word of God and thereby also very specifically faithful to the specific ministry that every believer has received from God. We should run the race that God has set before us. If you think it is a small race, then be

glad that He has not laid anything heavier on you. That can still happen. After all, you cannot oversee the end of the journey. In any case these are the biblical principles. That we focus on the Lord who has raised us, who has bought us, whose property we are, and whom we should serve from the ability we have also received from Him.

Among many Christians the idea lives that Christ does not live for Himself but for us. God is not there for us, but we are there for Him. He is higher than we are. He has made us—as creatures and moreover as new creatures. There are plenty of Scripture passages that say so.

Rom. 5:6

For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

For the without strength, for the ungodly, unrighteous (as opposed to righteous), for the evil (as opposed to the good), sinners.

It could not be clearer.

Rom. 5:9

Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Blood = life. He died for all, but we have been saved by His resurrection.

Rom. 6:2

God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

We should no longer live unto sin, for we are dead to sin. In other words, we should no longer serve sin but righteousness.³ Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? People immediately stumble over the word “baptized.”

Baptized = identification with...This has nothing whatever to do with water. That we were baptized into Jesus Christ means that we have been planted together in the likeness of his resurrection (verse 5).⁴ Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

He died for all, that those who live should no longer live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

He died for all, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. The resurrection from the dead and the life that belongs to it are unto the glory of the Father. It is not only about resurrection, just as it is not only about birth. Christ was raised so that in His further life His Father might be glorified.

2 Corinthians 5: 17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

We are saved in hope. There is therefore still a great deal awaiting us. He that is in Christ is become a new creature. All things are become new. This also means that the Lord

Jesus Christ, as Son of God, stands in the service of His Father and is therefore subject to the Father. According to the classic doctrine of the Trinity, Father and Son are equal and the One is not higher than the Other. Thereby the whole thought that Christ lives unto the glory of the Father is contradicted and reasoned away. This stands in all the classic creeds.

In any case the Son serves the Father. In Hebrews it says that Christ in His resurrection was appointed a servant, but thereby a Son. He was appointed High Priest (and King) after the order of Melchisedec. That was unto the glory of the Father, so that the Father might be glorified through His ministry. Just as the priests in the Old Testament performed a service so that the name of the Lord might be magnified, so the Lord Jesus Christ was raised from the dead so that He might thereafter serve His heavenly Father. Insofar as one can call the life of the Lord Jesus since then a walk—in the sense that He does something—He therefore walks unto the glory of the Father. In the same way we too should live unto the glory of the Father. That is walking in newness of life. The new life we have received enables us to walk unto the glory of the Father. That is also the purpose of that new life. To what end are we born again? So that in our lives God might be glorified. The rest of Rom. 6 is about that too. If we have been planted together with Him in the likeness of His death, we shall logically also be so in the likeness of His resurrection—even now (verse 5).⁶ Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. So that the body should no longer serve sin. In other words, so that we should no longer be slaves of sin. That is not quite the same as not sinning. We are no longer slaves of sin, for we have an alternative: we are dead with Christ unto sin and should now live unto God.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Reckon = *logizomai* = to count, to reckon.

We should therefore so reckon that we no longer serve sin but God. We are alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord, for Christ Jesus was raised unto the glory of the Father, and in the same way we too should walk in newness of life. We should yield our bodies as instruments of righteousness and no longer of unrighteousness (verse 13).

Rom. 14:7

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

8 For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

We live unto the Lord. Him we should serve.⁹ For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.

He not only rose but is actively living. He is alive!

He died, rose, and revived, that those who live should no longer live unto themselves but unto Him who died for them and rose again. That is 2 Cor. 5, where we came from. Here practically the same thing is said: that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. We live, and He should rule over us—that was the intention. We should be subject to Him and therefore walk unto His glory and thereby unto the glory of the Father.

Moreover it leads to our being rewarded for that life in His service and therefore being judged by Him whom we serve.¹⁰ For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

You see that here you have exactly the same combination as in 2 Cor. 5, only described differently. In verse 12 it then says that every one of us shall give account of himself to God.

We therefore do not live unto ourselves but unto the Lord. That is also the secret of the whole new covenant. In the old creation it is always about ourselves, about self-realisation. We must make something of it, stand up for ourselves, arrange our own life, make a career, provide well for our pension. Man must take care of himself. The Bible teaches otherwise. One should live unto the honour of God. The rule is: Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you, by the One who adds them unto you (Matt. 6:33). We should serve the Lord, and He will take care of us. That is the normal situation in a creation. The creature should serve the Creator, and the Creator will provide what is necessary. So it also works in a marriage relationship.

In Gal. 1 Paul says that the gospel is not after man, does not proceed from the old man, and is not directed to the old man. A born-again person should not be directed to himself and should not serve himself but should be directed to the Lord and serve Him. The gospel is also not there to serve people.

Gal. 2:19

For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.

One died for all, and therefore all died, that I might live unto God. That I might serve God. Here it is connected with the situation of the law. Paul says that we are not only dead to sin but also to the law—and that in accordance with the law. Indeed, strictly speaking the law itself arranged that we died, and thereby we are dead to the law. Yet that is not the purpose. Death is necessary on the way to resurrection—or rather to a new creation. I through the law died to the law, with the purpose that I might live unto God. We should no longer live to serve the law but to serve God.

These are very simple biblical truths. Yet for centuries there has been discussion about them. That can only persist—not because it is such a difficult theme, but because people find it difficult to accept, because man is simply self-centred. Traditional preaching of the gospel always gives the impression as though the Lord is there for us. Not only that we ourselves are self-centred and thereby make a mess of our life and eventually end up hopelessly in an evangelistic meeting, where we are then told that not only do we ourselves do our utmost to make something of our life, but that the Lord also does His utmost to make something of our life—so that we become even more important. No wonder that things often turn out even worse afterwards. They had all thought that the Lord would now put their life on track, which does not happen, so they become deeply disappointed in the Lord. They never understood that they were made alive to direct themselves to the Lord and live in dependence on Him, without being able to oversee it further. For the just shall live by faith.

On the announcement of an EO youth day it stood: God cannot manage without you. It is not entirely clear which god they meant by that. God has saved us and did so without our help. He will certainly reach His goal without us. The pleasant thing, however, is that we are involved in His plan, in His activities, when we at least sign up for it.

By biblical standards man is a servant. If he does not wish to realise that, it is only bad for his well-being. It is bad for a man to have to rule. A man should serve, because he is by definition a servant. The Lord Jesus Christ became Man. For He took upon Him the form of a servant and humbled Himself (Phil. 2:6–7). Man is therefore a servant. That is

why the Bible also presents to us: Choose you this day whom ye will serve (Josh. 24:15). There is nothing else for it; serve we shall. The only question is whom we shall serve. God cannot be served by men's hands. There is a good reason for that: He needs nothing (Acts 17:25). It is the other way round. He Himself is the One who gives to man life, breath, and all things. Paul is then still speaking of the old creation. We should therefore serve God.

Luke 1:72

To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

74 That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

We should be delivered out of the hand of our enemies. From what are we delivered? From sin, from death, and from law. Those are the enemies. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. That is therefore certainly included. We should therefore be delivered out of the hand of our enemies and should serve the Lord, the God of Israel (verse 68), without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life.

1 Cor. 6:19

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

You are not your own, for you are bought with a price.

As a comment on our not living unto ourselves but unto Christ, it says in 1 Cor. 10:32...

1 Cor. 10:32

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

In the Church there is no difference between Jew and Greek, for our fellowship is not after the flesh, for we know one another not after the flesh. Our fellowship and bond is not based on outward characteristics nor on manner of life. Neither biological nor cultural distinctions apply.

Paul does not please himself, for he is a servant of God and therefore places himself in the service of the Church, that many might be saved thereby. That applies to us too. We are servants of the Lord. The work of the Lord concerns the building up of the Church. That is why we are involved in it.

Being saved does not concern being born again, for the Corinthians already were, but being saved in soul. For we believe to the saving of the soul (Heb. 10:39).

Phil. 1:20

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

That those who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again.

To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. The latter is because we have become new creatures in Christ, while the body is still a covering from the old creation—but that is of a temporary nature.

Phil. 1:23

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

The expression “to be with Christ” does not refer to Paul’s future after his death, for that would tear it completely out of the context of the passage. We should already now, in this earthly body, serve Christ. We are with Him, yet still bound to the body and thereby limited. To depart and to be with Christ is better than to be bound and to be with Christ. It does not say here: to depart and to go to Christ. He was with Christ; he lives with Christ. His life is Christ—only still bound in the body.

Col. 3:23

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

Whatever you do, do it from the inward man and do it for the Lord and not for men. We serve no men but the Lord. Moreover, if you try to serve men, it will often prove that they do not take it kindly. Then you must resort to arguments that it was so well-intentioned. What men think of it is of no consequence; what matters is what the Lord thinks of it. That does not alter the fact that we should give no offence to others. We do therefore take others into account to some extent, but the basis is Christ, for we must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, and every one shall give account of himself. That is also stated in verse 24. The reward of the inheritance is the appearing before the judgment seat of Christ.

For ye serve the Lord Christ = He is our Master, and Him we serve. Our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thess. 5:10

Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

That we should live unto God; that we too should walk unto the glory of the Father. We should watch and not sleep, yet even for those who sleep it holds that they should live together with Him. For we have died with Him, been buried with Him, and been raised with Him unto the glory of the Father, in newness of life. And therefore it is the intention that we should live together with Him. The conclusion might then be that, since the life of Christ includes that He at any rate functions as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, we too who live with Him are priests after the order of Melchisedec. That is indeed so. He is King and Priest, and we are a royal and priestly people. The same thought is brought forward every time.

Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Heb. 13:21

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Note: to do his will, and not: that He might do our will. For the latter, courses have been invented in which you can learn how to beseech the Lord so that He is compelled to do your will after all. Yet it is the other way round: He prays to us and for us.

It is the intention that we should do good work for Him. He works in us that which is wellpleasing in His sight. We do not work in Him that which is wellpleasing to us. It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do (Phil. 2:13). Do all things therefore without murmurings and disputings (Phil. 2:14).

Good works occur many times in the New Testament. Comparison with those passages shows that good works are works that proceed from the heart of the believer. They are by definition unto the glory of the Father. Good work is work done in His service, yet wrought in us by Him. He works in us both the willing and then gives us also the ability to work, in His power.

The problem is that His will is often contradicted by us, because it does not fit our career plans or our self-realisation. Then it must be discussed. That often happens in the Bible study groups, of which there are so many. There they talk about their own problems and that the Lord does nothing about it. If those problems are nevertheless solved afterwards, the Lord is thanked for solving them, although earlier they were of the opinion that He did nothing about it. Then it goes wrong again, and so another session must be arranged in which they discuss how the other experiences it. That is then called Bible study. They talk about events in life and how they should be interpreted: whether it is the work of God or the work of the adversary. The difference between the two is hard to interpret. If you get into trouble you can blame the devil, but people prefer to say that the Lord does it to try us. Thus you can be proud that things go so badly in your life, for that shows that the Lord is busy with you. This of course has nothing whatever to do with the Bible. This is pure religion.

1 Pet. 4:1

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

He hath suffered for us in the flesh, culminating in His crucifixion. He died for us. He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin = he is dead to sin. Why? That he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. Being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we should serve Him without fear all the days of our life (Luke 1:74–75).

1 Pet. 4:3

For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

That is the world. We do not belong there. We do not seek it. We do not even seek the best for the world; nothing comes of that anyway. We seek the will of God, that which is wellpleasing unto God. In any case, the work the Lord does in our days—and thus also individually in our lives—is all in preparation for the revelation of His kingdom in the world. As long as He is in no hurry to reveal His kingdom to and in the world, neither are

we, and we count the longsuffering of the Lord to be salvation, whereby He does a work in us so that we learn to live wellpleasing unto God, to serve Him. After all, we shall do that throughout all eternity and walk in newness of life unto the glory of the Father. The rest we should leave to Him. He would take care of us, and we should be careful for nothing. So the Bible says. That it causes difficulties and is hard for the old man is true. Yet that does not alter the fact that the Bible teaches it so. We should therefore let it work in us and learn to conform to it.

Returning to 2 Cor. 5.

We should no longer live unto ourselves but unto Him who died for us and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Wherefore, on the basis of the foregoing, we henceforth know no man after the flesh—not even Christ.

Know = actually “see.” It is often translated that way. It is first of all seeing, and from that flows knowing. In English we also use those words that way. We see something, and if we see it well, we know it. It is therefore one of the terms for fellowship, for communion. We should, for example, follow peace with all men and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). If you do not pursue that holiness, there is in practice no fellowship with the Lord. Seeing is one of the words for communication and thereby for fellowship. That is why it is translated here as “know.”

Our fellowship as believers is not based on the flesh, on the old man, on the outward, but on other things. That fellowship is not after the flesh but after the spirit. Not after the outward but after the inward. Among the Corinthians there were divisions. One was of this one and another of that, and they dragged one another before the courts and all such nonsense. All tragic things. That came because they were focused on outward things. But Paul says that we should not know one another after the flesh. He does not say for nothing: though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.

Christ after the flesh = the Lord Jesus in His walk on earth. Some of the apostles—who incidentally also made their appearance in Corinth—knew the Lord Jesus after the flesh. Paul did not, but the Twelve certainly did. Although with Paul we are not entirely sure. In any case, insofar as they knew Him after the flesh, yet now no more. We are not connected with Jesus in His earthly walk but with the Lord Jesus in His present position—not merely as Man but as seated in heaven, as Firstborn of a new creation. A new creation of which He is the Son, the Heir, the King, the High Priest, the Firstborn, the Firstfruits. We have become firstfruits of a new creation in which the old plays no further role. So it stands.¹⁷ Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Our fellowship therefore does not exist, or come about, on the basis of things that play a role in this old world, but is based on the fact that we are new creatures in Christ.

That both verse 16 and 17 begin with “wherefore” means that you should read them both directly after verse 15. We should live unto Him who died for us and rose again.

Wherefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Verse 16 draws a negative conclusion, how it is not: we know Him no more after the flesh. Verse 17 draws a positive conclusion: so then if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. For clarity: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

If we were inclined to qualify that and think the old creation is thereby disadvantaged, that is not entirely wrong, but it says: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. But do we not still live in an earthly house, in this tabernacle? That is so, but fundamentally it plays no role in our position or worldview. We are now children of God and are—not partly but wholly—new creatures in Christ. Insofar as we still dwell in this old body, that body is accounted quickened in Christ. For He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11)—not our dead bodies. That body may form part of the old creation, yet it is reckoned to the new. And therefore it can be said that all things are passed away and become new.

The song “Hush now, wait now, all will not be, heaven and earth...” is not quite right. It may be right for the world as such, for we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promise, yet as far as ourselves are concerned it is different. We are in Christ a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. We are accounted to have death and resurrection behind us, just like Christ Himself. That is fundamental and forms the basis of our Christian worldview and walk. That is also the basis for church life. We are one in Christ. Insofar as that does not appear so, it is because people look at outward things, of which it is written to the Corinthians that they pass away. We are always confident, because we look at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (2 Cor. 4:18).

The principle of verses 16 and 17 should be clear: our bond is not on the basis of outward things.

Think, for example, of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. That has unfortunately been lost very early on. Apparently the influence of the Corinthians was great. Unity within the Church was soon regulated organisationally. That is how it goes in the world. That is how cultures are built up and how they then collapse with great noise. After some centuries such a culture slowly climbs again, and everything must be regulated anew. That is in the world, which is simply a broken world. Everyone knows that, and it is also a fixed expression: We live in a broken world. You can try to glue it, but that leads nowhere. The Lord does not do that either. He takes us out of it. Outside it we are one.

Every attempt to establish an outward unity is fundamentally a denial of the unity we have in Christ. That is why it backfires. If history teaches us anything, it is this. Nothing comes of it. The stronger the organisation, the more easily it then falls apart. The harder it is, the more brittle it becomes. At a certain point the organisation overplays its hand, and then it falls apart of itself. That is how it works in religion, in politics, in economics, and in the church.

We pay no attention to those things at all. We have fellowship with one another and are part of a new creation that cannot be broken. The best thing to do therefore is to acknowledge that fellowship. You must anyway, for if you do not acknowledge it, you cannot experience it either. If in your thinking it is otherwise, then in practice it will not work.

The discussion about the Lord’s Supper is not so much about its meaning—for that has long been lost—but chiefly about who may partake of it and who may not. Based therefore on outward things. One must at least give the impression of behaving decently, and then perhaps one may come to the Lord’s Supper. In some circles conditions are set beforehand, while in others it is allowed and one is even called to it. Yet if you have the heart to respond to the call, you get a house visit on Monday with the

question where you got the audacity from. You cannot then get out of it by saying you were invited to partake of the Lord's Supper. This even happens with regard to the preaching of the gospel. You must come to faith, but if you have the heart to do so, the elders are again on the doorstep. So easy is it all not. No, they see to that! They must remain in power. Why? Because people strive for an organisational and outward unity. One that can also be demonstrated, preferably shown. Look only at the Roman Catholic Church. That is one big show.

Our fellowship does not consist of outward things, however much we might perhaps value outward things. What it really concerns is a fellowship established in the resurrection of Christ. That unity cannot be broken. It is also formulated differently. Of that fellowship it is said that sin is not there. Sin is breach. In the new creation that plays no role. Peter said that we look for new heavens and a new earth according to His promise, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The thrust of that is that righteousness remains there. That is to say, it does not change any more. The Lord Jesus says: And no man shall pluck them out of my hand.

2 Corinthians 5: 18

And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

The following verses say that this is the ministry of the apostle Paul, to preach these things. It is not a preaching that calls above all to make peace with one another and come to a good organisation, but to come to Christ Himself.

That is also the theme in the epistle to the Hebrews, where it is taught that we as believers do not live under the old covenant but under the new, and that unity and fellowship come about in practice where we do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together—namely where we come with boldness unto the throne of grace. There we meet one another, and there is our fellowship.

Throughout the whole Bible the meal is a figure of fellowship. Sitting down at one table expresses the bond with one another. That makes those who sit down as it were one family, one household. Throughout the whole Bible the meal is therefore a figure of the new covenant and thereby of the Lord Himself, who invites us to His table. Read through the Old Testament and make an inventory of the meals that occur in it. It occurs very often; also the phenomenon that someone does not come to the meal.

Thus, for example, the book of Esther begins. Queen Vashti did not wish to come to the meal. If you study it properly, you conclude that Queen Vashti is a figure of the Jewish people living under the law. They do not come to the meal. She is therefore sent away. She had arranged her own meal and thus her own party. That whole history speaks of the old and the new covenant, of Judaism holding to the old covenant of the law, to its own party. When the invitation of the King comes to come to the new covenant, they do not come. They do not want that. Judaism wants to wait for the Messiah, but He must not have the audacity to come, for that would mean the end of their whole culture and thereby of their identity. That phenomenon runs through the whole history, also in Christendom.

Screening off the Lord's Supper, not allowing everyone to partake of it, is exactly the same as forbidding people to come to Christ. In practice it proves to be so. People stand in the way. They keep people from the Lord, just as the Pharisees did—the religious leaders under Judaism. They stood in the entrance of the house and made it impossible

to draw near to the Lord in His house. That this expresses itself in all sorts of goings-on around the celebration of the Lord's Supper is to be expected.

In the night in which the Lord was betrayed He took bread and wine. That was for everyone—not for Judas, but he had already departed before that time. Judas is the figure of the Jewish people. Those who hold to religion do not belong there. Whoever, however, comes to the Lord has part in His new covenant and eats at His table. We as born-again people are accounted to sit down at His table, at the meal. In the Bible it is written of the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Marriage = gamos = meal.

Very occasionally you do come across a bridegroom of whom it is still questionable whether it is well translated, while in all those stories you never come across a bride. A gamos is a meal. The other meaning of the term is rather nice, for it shows that the meal expresses fellowship. Coming to the meal is coming into fellowship. In the assembly of believers, partaking of the Lord's Supper is therefore also called "coming into fellowship."

Of course that is not fellowship in His death but in His life. The whole new covenant is called a meal in the Bible. We even know evangelistic songs in which a meal is spoken of, and a wedding hall, and that whoever will may come. So it is. We should come with boldness to the Lord to enter into His fellowship. That you had best give up all striving for outward unity and fellowship seems clear. Nothing more is needed. Yes, perhaps for the world, but why? In the world there is also no unity. In the world people form associations. But you can be sure that in all those associations there is plenty of quarrelling and gossip. Usually it is still somewhat bearable when they are small, but when they grow—and all those associations want that—then the trouble breaks loose. That is how those things work, and that is the world. We should therefore not pursue those things but pursue peace and holiness. That is nothing other than service to the Lord. It is separation from the world and service to the Lord. That is what it concerns: to serve Him, whatever it may be. The result of that is for the present not visible. Insofar as it becomes visible, that will only be at the coming again of Christ, when we shall be revealed with Him.

The intention is that in our life as children of God we should not know one another after the flesh. We have been drawn out of this world and called to sonship. The time that remains to us in the flesh we should serve Him. That is to say, do the will of God. You can also put it differently: that we should spend the time that remains to us in the flesh sitting at His table. He feeds us, He sustains us, and He gives us all that we need. That is the normal biblical principle of the meal as such, but in particular of what we call the Lord's Supper. It is not for nothing that the Lord introduced these things in the night in which He was betrayed. That is the same night in which He spoke at length with His disciples about the time that would now follow (John 13–17), in expectation of His coming again—about the days when He would no longer be with them, at least not bodily. The situation in the upper room and at the Lord's Supper table has actually never ended. We still live in those days. He invites us and says: "Come unto me; I am the bread of life, and this is the life of the new covenant. If you wish to have part in me, come and sit down at my table." Whoever will may come—and all the more when we know the thrust of this meaning. Then you also understand that this is the only sign we have retained, besides baptism. But that is a one-time event. Since then we live in fellowship with Him and our fellow believers and sit down at His table. There we meet

one another, and there is our fellowship—there where the Lord is in the midst of us. Not because He came into our midst, but because we have come to Him at His invitation. Behold, all things are become new. We have become in Christ a new creature and have been seated with Him in heaven. We have been brought into an unbreakable relationship with Him. In practice that means for us that we are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23) and that the Jerusalem which is above is the mother of us all (Gal. 4:26).¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

“All these” is not there. It says: all things are of God.

These = not entirely wrongly, for it concerns the things mentioned here. The definite article often has the function of a demonstrative pronoun.

The things Paul speaks of are of God. One therefore cannot qualify them. It already stood in 2 Cor. 3:4–5...

2 Cor. 3:4

And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament...

Here Paul returns to that. What in 2 Cor. 3:6 is still called ministers of the new covenant is called in the last verses of 2 Cor. 5 a ministry of reconciliation.

All these things are therefore of God, who hath reconciled us to himself.

Reconciliation in the New Testament is the translation of two different biblical concepts. That makes it somewhat tricky. You are familiar with the phenomenon of synonyms—two different words indicating the same concept. Here we have the opposite: one word indicating two different things = a homonym.

Even if the word “smurf” stood here, the meaning would be perfectly clear. He who hath made us one with himself, brought us together. That is also the normal meaning of the term in English. You give each other a kiss and then it is over again; you are reconciled once more.

To reconcile = katallassō;

allassō = to make different, to change, to exchange for something else, to alter.

The idea of this word is that differences are overcome, that things are brought together. Our English word “lasso” also derives from it. The cowboy and the cow are brought together.

The term therefore denotes the establishment of a relationship that did not previously exist. The differences are overcome, whereby at least two parties are brought together. Kata = downwards, but also “towards each other.”

The preposition functions as an intensification of the term.

It is therefore a strengthened term, stronger than our English word “reconcile”

The other Greek word for reconciliation is hilaskomai (to be propitious, to reconcile), hileōs (merciful), or hilastērion (reconciliation, mercy seat, that which brings about reconciliation). This is the translation of the Hebrew word for “to cover,” in the sense of “to remove.” When it concerns reconciliation and the Day of Atonement, it is about kâphar, about covering. That concerns the removal of sins. Ultimately these concepts do come together, for because sins are covered—translated as “reconciled”—reconciliation is established in the sense of katallassō. The sins no longer stand in the way, and thus God and man are brought together.

If you do not know the difference between the two words, you hardly notice it anyway, because the context usually makes clear what is meant. Only in the case of Romans 3 do you need to know it, when it says that God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation. Then you need to know that this is a reference to the Day of Atonement = hilastērion, actually the word for mercy seat. It is therefore drawn from the Old Testament symbolism of the Day of Atonement. It literally says that He is our mercy seat, but of course the whole symbolism of the Day of Atonement lies behind it.

In 2 Cor. 5:18 it is: who hath reconciled us in Christ, and thus it concerns bringing into relationship with God. Two parties have been brought into a renewed and improved relationship with each other. If that relationship must be characterised, it is therefore that of the preceding verse. How so a new relationship? Well, we have become in Christ a new creature. Not the sinful broken relationship of the old creation, in which everything is divided and within which the Christians at Corinth were divided, but a new creation in which all is one.

This old world is characterised by strife, by discord, by duality. People therefore speak of a dualistic world; there are always oppositions. In a new creation, on the contrary, there is unity and thus fellowship. That is difficult to describe, because in this old world it actually does not exist. To this day we do not know what it means when it says that those two shall be one flesh. Unity does not exist in this old world and cannot exist. That unity therefore largely escapes our power of imagination. That makes it difficult. That is why it is presented to us in all sorts of images and described, so that even if we can hardly form a picture of it, we might yet live from it. And thus we believe in that one holy catholic Church. We do not only believe in it, but also have part in it.¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

Because Christ hath reconciled us, He thereby automatically becomes our Mediator. Those two parties are joined together by Jesus Christ. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:24). For He is that propitiation, He is the One who hath brought about the covering of sin and in whom and through whom that hath been accomplished. Our reconciliation with God is therefore by Jesus Christ, who hath brought these two parties together—in His Person, but also through His work.

2 Corinthians 5: 19

To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. What in verse 18 is called “by Jesus Christ” is called in verse 19 “in Christ,” though in practice that makes no difference at all.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.

We are in Christ a new creature; we are in Christ reconciled to God; we are by Christ reconciled to God. God is in Christ and we are in Christ, and in Him we meet one another.

In Eph. 2 it says that He is our peace, who hath made both one in himself. Peace is to a high degree synonymous with katallassō. Peace presupposes that two opposing parties have been united. In Eph. 2 it concerns Jew and Gentile, who have become one in Christ, and therefore He is our peace.

In 2 Cor. 5 He is our reconciliation, because He hath made these two parties one. Thus peace and reconciliation are synonymous concepts.

The word *katallassō* occurs only a few times in the Bible:

- Rom. 5:10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

By = through. Through His death. Not merely through death as an instrument. That cannot be, for although some make much of the eternal sonship of Christ—that He already was that before the ages of the ages—how then can the Son die? He only became the Son after His resurrection, through the death of Him who is now the Son. You must also consider that it is not about His dying, for after the death of anyone whatsoever *katallassō* can never be accomplished. Death is by definition the end of any relationship. Death is separation, the opposite. Afterwards one can still say that when the word *dia* = through is followed by a genitive, it at any rate has the meaning of “through it.” But if you read attentively you need not even know that. We were reconciled to God, brought into a new relationship, through His death and resurrection—through His death. Into it and out again.

- 1 Cor. 7:11 But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife.

A renewed relationship therefore. This is drawn from the Mosaic law, but that is drawn from the doing and not doing of God Himself. God’s relationship with Israel is, at least for a significant part, ended in separation (the ten tribes were sent away with a bill of divorce). Afterwards it is said that God will betroth them unto Him for ever (Hos. 2:19). Or it says: “Yet return again to me” (Jer. 3:1). Reconciliation would take place, ultimately realised in the days of the coming again of Christ.

- 2 Cor. 5:18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 2 Cor. 5:19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;
- 2 Cor. 5:20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.

Reconciliation therefore means to establish a relationship, or to re-establish it.¹⁸ And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. If you had only this verse it would be difficult to explain. This reconciliation would be preached by servants. That is why it is also called a ministry = *diakonia*—*deaconry*. This word therefore certainly includes the preaching of the Word. Paul says that this is his ministry. The apostles had no ruling function. Insofar as they were bishops (= *episkopoi*), they had no ruling function. That is what the Roman Catholic Church made of it, and after the Reformation we have never got rid of it. They have a serving function, and their service consists primarily in the preaching of the Word of God.

The preaching of the gospel does not aim at the building up of local communities, groups, organisations, or whatever. Nor does it aim at promoting your well-being or welfare, but only at making the truth known. Nothing more than that. That the knowledge of the truth results in local churches arising and can contribute greatly to our

well-being or welfare—which is not necessarily the same—is true, but that is never the purpose.

That the truth makes us free is also true, but you cannot preach freedom, only the truth. The intention is that by hearing the truth one becomes free. There is a great deal of misunderstanding about that.

Everyone seems to have to be busy with church building, but that is not biblical at all. It concerns the preaching of the truth, of course from a subordinate and serving position. 2 Cor. 3:3

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

4 And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;

6 Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.

Deacons of the new covenant means the same as ministers of reconciliation or of peace. It is a covenant. God hath bound Himself to us by making a covenant. Thereby we have indeed been reconciled to God. He is our peace, and the new covenant is called the covenant of peace.

The problem with the Corinthians was that they did not acknowledge Paul as an apostle. He speaks here primarily about himself and about Timothy. God hath made them able to do this, and therefore they must do it. Moreover, they know the terror of the Lord and therefore they simply carry on. They persuade men to faith. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Whether they do it willingly or unwillingly makes no difference, for God hath entrusted it to them.

God hath given us the ministry of reconciliation...19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

God was reconciling = it has now happened.

We have been reconciled to God through the death of His Son. That the word “death” is used is because the essence is that God hath made an end of the old creation, so that the fact that we are old creatures no longer stands in our way to come to God. That old creation was the hindrance, but it is no more, for God hath settled accounts with it. Legally at any rate. In fact that will happen at His coming again. You can no longer say to yourself or to God that the old creation stands in your way to come to Him. That does not alter the fact that the real new relationship only exists through the resurrection of Christ, in which everyone who believes in Him has part.

He died for the unrighteous, the ungodly, the enemies, and so forth, but He lives for everyone who believes. In any case, God does not impute sins—not to believers and not to unbelievers. For God was reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. That God does not impute sins may be nice for the days that remain in the flesh, but you die in the end anyway. In the long term you therefore gain little from it. You are only saved when you receive eternal life. You must be delivered from death. Death is sin and sin is death. Salvation only comes in the resurrection of Christ. God indeed does not impute sins, but that does not mean that man is then saved.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Since one died for all, all died, and therefore their sins are also not imputed to them. Insofar as God will yet judge man according to his works, it therefore does not concern the works of the flesh, which are... (read Rom. 5), but according to the works that proceed from their unbelief, that have proceeded from the rejection of the reconciliation accomplished through Christ. That is therefore a new fall. People reject the Word of God again. Precisely within Christendom it is said: "Yes, God did say it, but He did not mean it that way." That is a repetition of the history in Eden. Then it stops, and that therefore also has consequences. On the other hand, insofar as believers are judged according to their works, it concerns works of faith just as much. Not the works that proceed from the natural man. God hath long since settled accounts with the old man. The ministry of reconciliation is the preaching of these truths.

2 Corinthians 5:20

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

The call is to man. We pray you in Christ's stead = Christ prays us. He asks us: "Be ye reconciled to God." Insofar as Paul is a servant of Jesus Christ, he comes to us and asks us on Christ's behalf that we let ourselves be reconciled to God.

2 Corinthians 5: 21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

A short summary: for Him who knew no communion with sin, He hath made sin for us, with the purpose that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We should have part in the righteousness of God in Him and therefore be the righteousness of God in Him. God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness (Rom. 3:25).

The discussion always concerns when He was made sin and thereby concerns the Person and the being of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was made sin for us. How and when then? Those two things are connected. Everything you say about it will be used against you. There are quite a number of parallel texts in the Bible that concern this, to which we shall return later. The Bible is clear enough about it. The question therefore is why there is so much discussion about it. That is because people have always wanted to reason away the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, simply because they do not wish to accept the consequence of it. The consequence is namely that salvation comes about through death and resurrection. Insofar as there is exaltation, it proceeds from humiliation. If therefore you deny the humiliation, you simultaneously deny the exaltation. That happens with regard to the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, because that is directly applied to us. People want to be high and to mean something. The Bible teaches that this is precisely the wrong way. That is namely the gospel of the serpent, who says that by eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil you become as God. That is the gospel of the improvement of man by man.

The doctrine concerning Christ is called Christology. No matter from which side you enter that doctrine, people make no distinction between the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk and the Lord Jesus now, after His resurrection. Texts such as "though we have

known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more” therefore cause great difficulty. They cannot be placed in conventional Christology.

People read in the Bible that Christ is the image of God and moreover that He is God. People suggest and say that He is not only that but always was. Therein lies the great problem.

One step further and you arrive at the doctrine concerning the disputed humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ and His deity. If you speak about the one, you set the other against it and vice versa. There has been strife about that for centuries and even war waged over it. Yet it need not be a problem. You only need to know the difference between Jesus of Nazareth in His earthly walk and what He now is, in and through His resurrection.

Usually that has been systematically reasoned away, whereby His humiliation, His suffering, His death and resurrection have been reasoned away. Insofar as people do know it, it has lost its meaning, because it is described as a kind of circus act, as a play, as a show. They have no difficulty with God, but they do with the man Jesus.

On the one hand people know Jesus of Nazareth with a rather unfortunate career here on earth, of which little came. With God they have no difficulty, but Jesus—well, an unfortunate history, insofar as they still accept that history. Yet those people celebrate Christmas exuberantly. They have no difficulty with that at all, for it concerns the birth of a man.

Unitarians deny the Trinity of God. They do not acknowledge Jesus as God, not even after His resurrection. They have good credentials as long as they speak about the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk. The Jehovah’s Witnesses are close to that. They therefore usually begin at the door with the doctrine of the Trinity, because they know how vulnerable it is. For them the Lord Jesus is still someone who has been promoted as man, but that is about where it ends. Salvation is after all not through Christ but through the organisation. They do have quite a number of sound arguments for their doctrine. On the other hand Christ is described as God. People also often use the expression that He was God manifested in the flesh. That, however, is a text that does not occur in the Bible, but unfortunately did find its way into our KJV. People regard the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk as God in human form, but they mean a human disguise. The problem with this view is that it nullifies the humiliation of the Lord Jesus. The most complicated discussions are hung on Phil. 2 and especially on that one word, namely that He emptied Himself. People have great difficulty with it, because the ordinary normal meaning is that He laid aside His deity and that there was therefore a period in which He at any rate must and can not be regarded as God. For He was not.

The problem is that we cannot understand how the origin of Jesus of Nazareth lies before His birth in Bethlehem and that He could say: Before Abraham was, I am (John 8:58). That is the only real problem. After that you need have no problem at all, for after that you have to do with the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk (that man; Behold the man; God hath taken Him from among men; He hath given the judgement to one man) and afterwards God hath highly exalted Him in His resurrection. If, however, He was also God in His humanity, then He could not be exalted. Thereby the exaltation of Christ is as it were reasoned away. If He was always already exalted, how then was He exalted? You then simply reason away His whole ministry on earth.

In John 17 the Lord Jesus closes the evening with His disciples—and in fact His whole earthly walk—with a prayer and says...

John 17:1

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

In the first place, the One who says “Father” stands in rank below that Father. That is contrary to the current creeds, which say that the Father and the Son are equal. The One is not below the Other and the Other is not below the One. That reasoning is by definition impossible. We keep to John 17, but now go for a moment to John 5...John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. (After the example of the Father, for the Father is higher than the Son.)¹⁹ ... The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise (whereby the Son is therefore subordinate to the Father).

20 For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel (for the Son is subordinate to the Father).

21 For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will (Now you would say they are equal, but a few verses later it says that the Father hath given this to the Son and therefore the Son is subordinate to the Father).

22 For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (The One who receives is less than the One who gives, according to the Bible—see especially in this connection Heb. 7).

23 That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

30 I can of mine own self do nothing:

The Son is the Receiver and He receives from the Father who gives. He is therefore dependent on the Father and thus subordinate to the Father. Back to John 17...

John 17:1

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

The intention is that the Son should receive eternal life from the Father and He then gives it again to those whom the Father hath given Him. For God hath promised His Spirit and given it to Jesus, and He gives the Spirit to everyone who comes to Him (Acts 2:33).

4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; His ministry was unto the glory of the Father. Not because He was the image of God, but because He had the ministry of a Prophet. He preached the Word of God, with everything that may belong to it, also after the example of the Old Testament prophets, who performed miracles and knew things that had never been told them, and so forth. Those things are not proof of the deity of Jesus, but only prove that He was a prophet. He even raised the dead, but in the Old Testament there were also prophets who did that.

He hath therefore glorified the Father on the earth. In short, He hath finished the work that God gave Him to do. His work was done. The sequel to that was that He endured the cross and despised the shame. Why? For the joy that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2). Therefore He is seated at the right hand of God and therefore highly exalted.

John 17:5

And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

This could only be prayed because He was not yet glorified. He could pray it only because on earth He was not the image of God. He was not the brightness of God's glory. He glorified God in His works, but in His being He was not the brightness of God's glory. Indeed, it says: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him (Isa. 53:2).

He would not merely receive glory from God but the glory of God. He would be clothed with the glory of God. He would namely become the image of God. He did not have the glory of God. Since when not? There is of course endless dispute about that, because people want to regard Him as God manifested in the flesh for as long as possible.

Nevertheless, at some point He must have been made sin for us and at some point He must have been numbered with the transgressors (Isa. 53:12; Mark 15:28).

Since when then? The trend is to postpone that as long as possible, preferably until the moment in Gethsemane. Otherwise one can so hardly place His prayer there. At any rate you see Him there as man, compassed with weakness. Others push it even further forward, until He hangs on the cross and darkness comes.

When did He lay aside His glory? Well, one phase in that was His incarnation, from His birth.

He was numbered with the transgressors. What is another word for transgressor? A man. He was compassed with weakness. What is another word for a weak one? A man. Enosh = man = the literal translation is: sick, weak, and miserable; a mortal therefore.

When did He lay aside the form of God? When He took upon Him the form of a man, at His birth. He was born on earth as man. Then He laid aside glory, insofar as He still had it, for here in John 17 it says that He laid aside that glory before the world was. He laid aside that glory at the coming into being of this world. Since the seven days of Genesis 1 this world has not been unto the glory of God. Indeed, the existence of this world is in practice unto the dishonour of God. Not only according to the finding of unbelievers, but also on absolute and objective grounds. Everyone knows the argument: "If there is a God, why does He do nothing about the world?"

The existence of this world is therefore not unto the glory of God. Some conclude from that that there is therefore no God. That conclusion is quite close to the truth. They have only not taken all the arguments into account, but only those that are before the eyes.

One can at any rate conclude that God apparently does not meddle with this world. One can at most conclude that God occasionally intervenes in this world. That is also recorded in the Bible. By our standards usually too late, and that is certainly not unto the honour of God. For example, if God must lead Israel out of Egypt, why did He not earlier ensure that they did not have to move to Egypt? He Himself had brought them there. The unbeliever says that God then changed His mind. As if God could not immediately have put an end to the famine in the days of Joseph, so that the whole family would not have had to be brought to Egypt and could simply have stayed in the land of Canaan!

Another question: Why does God not immediately give Israel a king from Judah, as He had promised, but first one from Benjamin? In short, all that is not unto the honour of God. That is why it also says: For your sakes my name is blasphemed (Rom. 2:24). When God made this world, that was not unto His glory. He thereby laid aside glory. To this day shame is spoken of Him and His righteousness is seriously called into question. That is why the work of Christ now serves to declare God's righteousness. It is high time that God's righteousness is demonstrated, for it does not now appear that God is a righteous God. That is what is called into question. His name is blasphemed. If God made this world, then He should have made a world without sin. Then you can say that it is because of man, but then you get into the endless discussion whether God could not have prevented that. In Christian schools one then standardly learns that God did not make man as a robot but as a man with free will. Could God then not have made man with a sound mind, so that he would will the good and refrain from evil? The Bible says in reply that man does indeed will the good but cannot do it. Could God then not have made him that way? And so on. You never get out of that.

God therefore laid aside His glory already before He made this world. The Jews even teach that. The masculine of God says: "I will make a creation." The feminine of God, His outside, says to that: "Then I will come along." The outside of God is Jehovah, also among the Jews. That is also completely biblical, but it is unto the dishonour of Jehovah that He involves Himself with this sinful world. Nevertheless He does it, for otherwise nothing comes of it. And He humbles Himself for that purpose.

That is why in the life of the Lord Jesus you see the same thing, on a much lower level. He occupies Himself with the individual, with the sinner. He associates with them and it is held against Him. It is unto His dishonour. But well, otherwise nothing comes of those sinners. So He came to seek and to save that which was lost and went about with harlots and publicans.

He therefore already laid aside glory in the coming into being of this world. He only claims that glory back after He had further humbled Himself, when He came here in human form, whereby He laid aside His deity. He was once God, but not on earth. He is God, but since His resurrection. You must know that distinction. That is the problem of Christology.

He became man and even as man humbled Himself, for as man He could have claimed the throne of David. But He took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That is a shameful death, for cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13). And because He was obedient unto the death of the cross, therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, implying that He was first highly humiliated in His service to God. Seen that way, a doctrine that says Jesus was God on earth is actually blasphemous.

It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Precious in His sight is the death of the sinner. He was made sin for us. He bore our sins and was accounted as a sinner. He was born as Head of mankind, whom He would represent before God. First in His work as Redeemer and therefore as sinner and as Representative of a sinful mankind, which therefore brought Him the punishment of sin. Secondly still as Representative of mankind and therefore as the rightful claimant to the throne over not only mankind but through mankind over this whole world, of which He first bore the shame—not only on the cross of Golgotha but from Adam to the cross of Golgotha. He went a way of humiliation, for the joy that

was set before Him—namely the coming into being of a new creation and more particularly unto a declaration of the righteousness of God, in the service of God. It was therefore not all for me, although there is also a core of truth in that, but it was for God, in the service of God. Of course, so greatly hath God loved the world and therefore it was also for me, but He did it for God and in the service of God. On the basis of His faithfulness to His heavenly Father He was highly exalted. Because He let Himself be humiliated, therefore God also hath highly exalted Him.

He was indeed God on earth, but He never made use of that deity. The temptation of the Lord in His life, certainly by the devil, was a temptation to make Him use that deity after all.

Thank God He never did. It is therefore much better to say that He laid aside His deity and in His resurrection was again clothed with it, as stands in Phil. 2:6–9. Not by His own power, but because His Father gave it to Him

If He voluntarily laid aside His deity, He will also have been able to take up that deity again. The devil also asks Him to do that, but He did not. He came here as man and was come to this hour for this purpose, to do the will of the Father, for the sake of the righteousness of God, with the result the new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, whereby a man was promoted to heaven. He was taken from among men (not as one disguised as man) and set before God in the things to be done there. He was appointed High Priest. That highly exalted position means little if it always existed. There are plenty of Scripture passages that say this was not always so. We too should here on earth be humiliated, at least do a service, not reckon the old man, to be afterwards exalted by God. Indeed, it says that we should do what Jesus did, lay aside the old man. Did He then have it? That was He and He laid it aside. We should follow that example. He was made sin for us.

Rom. 8:2

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

This verse connects seamlessly with John 1:17, where it says that the law was given by Moses (that is that law of sin and death), but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (that is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus). It concerns the contrast between the old and the new covenant.³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

For... and now follows a comma. The subordinate clauses must be between commas, so that you can see what the main clause is. The main clause is: For God condemned sin in the flesh. The translators have also lost their way here, for otherwise they would have written “God hath” as “God hath.” The sentence is therefore: For God hath condemned sin in the flesh. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death, for God hath condemned sin in the flesh.

Now come the subordinate clauses. In a bit of good evangelistic preaching one tells that the Lord Jesus bore our sins and that God condemned the Lord Jesus as the Bearer of those sins on the cross of Golgotha, as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. God hath condemned sin in the flesh. Therefore we have the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. That has happened.

As explanation you first get the first subordinate clause: what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh. This clause implies that the law by definition aims to

condemn sin. Actually to remove and prevent it, by saying that you must not do this and not so, but do that and also that. Sins are misses, faults. The law removes them. If someone living under the law nevertheless makes a miss, he is punished for it. Then he gets a slap on the head and that will teach him, hopefully. At least, according to the philosophy and according to Calvinistic philosophy. That is the idea of law, of instruction, also in practice.

Yet here it says that this was not possible under the law. The law cannot achieve that. The law could not do it, for the law is laid upon the flesh and the flesh is weak. You cannot lay upon the flesh demands that exceed the strength, the possibilities, and the potential of the flesh. The flesh is weak and therefore you cannot lay a burden upon the flesh. That is why Heb. 7:18 says that the setting aside of the foregoing commandment (the old covenant of the law) is made because of its weakness and unprofitableness. The law is indeed holy, just, and good and is moreover the good, but the law simply does not work, “for,” says Paul, “when I would do good, evil is present with me and the evil that I would not, that I do and the good that I would, I do not” (Rom. 7:12 ff.). That is man. He is not only sinful but sin. He has a sinful nature that resists the good.

Condemning sin in the flesh was therefore not possible by the law. That is why even before the law existed and also during the law a new covenant was already announced. Under the law it is demonstrated that man is incorrigible; that man does not merely sin but that it is his being. Then you can do nothing more about it.

What the law could not do... What then should the law have done? Condemn sin in the flesh. That did not succeed and history proves it.³ For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

The first subordinate clause was therefore: what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh;

The other subordinate clause is: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin.

The Son is the One we now know as the Son, as the One who is now seated at the right hand of God. This is written after the resurrection of Christ. Insofar as anything like the Son of God in the messianic sense of the term occurs in the Old Testament, it is always in a prophetic way. It is always the announcement of the coming of the Son, who will one day come. And He only came in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The same applies to an expression like “the cross of Christ” = the cross of Him whom we now know as the Christ and who on the basis of His utter humiliation has been appointed Messiah. Further it makes no difference, for we know of whom it concerns. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and moreover for sin. Because of sin, to solve that problem, namely to be able to judge sin in the flesh. God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, to condemn sin in the flesh.

In that way God condemned sin, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

Now of course it concerns the expression: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. It therefore does not say that the Lord Jesus here on earth received a “little package” with sins in it. For He was the Lamb of God and bore the sins of the world. Those sins were as it were laid upon Him, but how it worked in practice is as it stands here: God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was therefore born in the position of a sinner. Not merely legally. He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was

therefore a sinner. Whether He also sinned? That is another story. The Bible gives us no statements about that.

This verse stands in the epistle to the Romans. The most elementary epistle with regard to the gospel, with a legal basis for it. There it says: God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and God condemned those sins in the flesh, but especially in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ, who was made sin for us. When? When He received this flesh. At His incarnation therefore.

That God through His Son condemned sin in the flesh could be on the basis of His descent. He thereby had certain rights. He was the Son of Adam and therefore Head of mankind. Therefore He had the right to represent His whole family (in this case the whole mankind) in law and to take the place of any other man. That He then also did. Thus He was condemned as a sinner, also as a sinful man, but actually as the whole sinful mankind of which He was the Representative. The expression "Behold the man," in connection with His condemnation and crucifixion, implies: "Behold mankind." Whether Pilate knew that does not matter. And therefore: one died for all and therefore all died.

For us it is sufficient to know that the Lord Jesus represented the whole mankind and that He bore the punishment of sin. In what position He individually stood as man, the Bible tells us something about, but not so much with regard to that issue of sin. What the Bible tells us about Him in the Gospels is rather little. By our standards the four Gospels are examples of a poor biography. A listing of facts is given in the style of: and then... and then... and then... and then.... But what kind of person was He? That is why so much can be philosophised about it. You can lay upon the Person of the Lord Jesus what you will and make Him into your ideal. Some see Him as a pacifist, while others see Him as a freedom fighter who would lead the Jews in their revolt against the Romans.

If you want to know how it really was with the Lord Jesus, then you must be in the Psalms, for the psalmists stand as it were in the shoes of the Lord Jesus, so that the words of the psalmist are actually the words of the Lord Jesus, especially in His humiliation. That appears especially from all those prayers for deliverance. Those are the prayers that the Lord Jesus offered with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7). Thus you know approximately what went on in Him. But well, people do not believe that the Psalms speak of that. A few may still just believe that a single psalm concerns that, such as Psalm 22, but in reality all the Psalms concern that. They are in the first place words of the Lord Jesus, although He does not there represent the sinner in general but only the believing sinner. He appeals to the grace of God and prays for deliverance. He there also to a high degree represents the believing remnant, whether in our days or in the future.

If you know these principles, then you read through the Psalms that way and understand what it says. Therein is spoken of His state of mind and His emotions, His ideals and disappointments and His experiences, how He stood in this world. That was indeed as a sinner and so it is also described there. He appeals to the grace of God. He makes promises that if His prayer is heard, He will declare the praise of God and so forth. Thus in the Psalms the New Testament time is announced.

In short, the Bible hardly speaks about sin as such and the relation of the Lord to sin. We find that too little, but that is reasoned from a religious, or rather Calvinistic standpoint, in which it always concerns the sinfulness of man that must be suppressed.

And therefore we want to know how it was with the Lord Jesus. We cannot find that in the Bible and therefore we make Him into the ideal and say that He was without sin. When people read in the Bible that the Lord Jesus fulfilled the law (which one indeed reads in this verse (Rom. 8:3)), they read it as though it means that the Lord kept the Mosaic law neatly. That, however, is not what it means. It means that He put an end to the dominion of the law. He fulfilled the law by being condemned and executed by the law as a sinner. Thus He fulfilled the law: as a transgressor, as a breaker of the law. You can then say that He did not Himself commit those sins, but the Bible says nothing about that. What we do read is that those who thought they had to live under the law had great objections to the practical life of Jesus of Nazareth. How could that be? Apparently because He did not keep the ordinances. He had to keep the sabbath. That is not only a Jewish law but also a Mosaic one. It appears that He did not do that. His comment was that He was the Son of man and Lord of all and therefore also of the sabbath and that He therefore stood above that law (Matt. 12:1–8). According to His own saying He therefore did not keep the law. Why should He either? He would anyway be condemned by the law, also from God's side. That was already fixed. There was nothing more to lose. He also had no interest in it.

Moreover, the preaching was that within a foreseeable time the new covenant would break in, to replace the old. One would not make so much fuss about the sinfulness of man and the amount of sins man produces per hour, per day, or per year.

You would not make so much fuss about the number of sins. Whoever breaks one article of the law once is a transgressor of the whole law. Full stop, end of the story. That makes no further difference, except for someone who thinks he must live neatly under the law; that God requires that of him. That he keeps all the ordinances and commandments. That is simply not so. The Bible teaches that He stood in our place and was accounted by God among the sinners. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. That must be sufficient for us. He represented mankind.

Then people invented that if He Himself had sinned, He could no longer represent us. Where does the Bible say that? Then He would have had to die for His own sins and could therefore not die for our sins. If that is so and He died for my sins, then He could therefore not also die for your sins. Then He already bore someone's sins. Yet He represented the whole mankind and insofar as He Himself belonged to that whole mankind, He therefore also represented Himself.

People have thought up all sorts of things to make the Lord Jesus the ideal figure, according to the ideals they themselves have. Yet we should know the biblical Jesus and according to the Bible He came in the likeness of sinful flesh.

Gal. 4:1

Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; A child differs in nothing from a slave and is the property of the parents. He is identified with his parents.

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

Tutors = pedagogues.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. When we were children = when we lived under the law.

The elements of the world = the law.

The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24). It primarily concerns the Jews here. Gal. 3:24 connects with 4:3.

Even so we, Jews, when we were children, were in bondage under the law. It is here called the elements of the world, for the whole world is governed by law.⁴ But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law;

Gal. 4:4

But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

The fulness of which time? The fulness of the time appointed beforehand by the Father, from verse 2. For God had a plan, and His plan is worked out at appointed times. When that fulness of the time came—some four thousand years after Adam—God sent forth His Son. That Son was born of a woman and in the period when the law still held sway. The period of the Lord Jesus on earth is therefore Old Testament time. This also means that the four Gospels, which describe the life of the Lord Jesus, describe Old Testament times. That they are nevertheless New Testament books is because they were written after the resurrection of Christ and because the preaching in the Gospels is not the preaching of the old covenant but of the new covenant, which had by then also arrived. Nevertheless, the New Testament only comes into operation at the resurrection of Christ. Just as in our days we can still study and describe the situation under the law, so those who lived in the period of the law could study, describe, and announce the New Testament situation.

God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law...

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. To redeem them that were under the law. From what? From the law therefore. Not only because this must be the conclusion from this one verse alone, but because the whole Bible book is about that.

He came under the law to redeem those who were under the law and that we might since then receive the adoption as sons. He was made of a woman and made under the law. The law was laid upon the flesh. Moreover, the law was laid upon the unrighteous. The law is not made for a righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9). If therefore someone lives under the law, he is on that account accounted unrighteous beforehand.

Next text.

The Lord Jesus was made a little lower than the angels, but in His resurrection He hath inherited a more excellent name than they (Heb. 1:4). That can only be if He was previously made lower than the angels. Heb. 2 then says...

Heb. 2:9

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

A little lower = for a short time.

To taste death = to undergo death.

If you know nothing about it, it still seems that He was made lower than the angels in order to be able to die. By becoming like men He was made lower than the angels. This immediately brings you to another heated discussion, namely the question whether the Lord Jesus was mortal. That is indeed a serious discussion. People believe that He was without sin and had no sinful nature, which means that He therefore could not die. The problem is of course that thank God He did die and that He Himself became man in order to be able to die. The solution to this problem is then that He could not die by

nature and if He nevertheless died, you must interpret that differently, for it says that He gave up the ghost. He bowed His head and gave up the ghost. Normally it goes the other way round. In other words, He laid down His life Himself, for He had power to lay it down and power to take it again (John 10:18).

The expression "He gave up the ghost" is used throughout the Bible for all sorts of people who die. That expression therefore simply means that He died. Of both Ananias and Sapphira it says that they gave up the ghost (Acts 5:5, 10). They certainly did not do that voluntarily. With such an explanation you therefore get nowhere.

That He had power to lay down His life and to take it again refers to His right to do so.

Power = right. For that He had come, to lay down His life.

He had the right to let that be done and to let that happen and to choose that. He also chose it, for to that end He had come, to die. He was therefore mortal. Moreover, people thought Him too old for His age. That surely means that He was subject to corruption. He came into this world that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Heb. 2:10

For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

The Lord Jesus, who would bring us unto glory, would be made perfect through sufferings. We would be brought unto glory through Him and be one with Him. That is why He calls us His brethren.¹⁴ Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Forasmuch = because.

He also Himself likewise took part of flesh and blood. Not only that, for it says: likewise, which is overcomplete unless it emphasises that the Lord and we here on earth stood in exactly the same circumstance.

He likewise took part of flesh and blood. Was He then mortal? Yes, for He took part of flesh and blood that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death.

Heb. 2:18

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

He was tempted. James says of that that God cannot be tempted (Jas. 1:13). In other words, this indeed concerns the man Jesus of Nazareth, who was tempted. Everyone knows that, for the history of the Lord Jesus in the Bible begins with the temptation in the wilderness. He was tempted there to make use of His divine attributes, qualities. Actually therefore a temptation to lay aside His humanity again, implying that this was also possible. He lived on earth as man, yet was nevertheless considered capable of forgetting His humanity again and taking up His divine qualities, or making use of them, which however He did not do. He was on the way to death, but was tempted to turn back after all. That He did not do. How that works? No idea. How an angel can appear here on earth in the form of a man and then also go back again, we do not know either. At any rate it is biblical, and we leave it at that.

He did not yield to that temptation and therefore we cannot conclude otherwise than that He lived here on earth as man. All the arguments for the deity of the Lord Jesus in His earthly walk we may perhaps have learned from youth, but they cut no ice. If you say that He made no use of His deity, then you must not afterwards claim that the miracles He did proceeded from His deity and serve as proof of His deity. Then He did after all

make use of His deity. Yet those miracles only prove that He was a Prophet. The miracles He did were also done by the Old Testament prophets. He was a Prophet. Those Old Testament prophets were sinners, yet they did those miracles. The Lord Jesus stood in that sinful position; He bore my sins and came in the likeness of sinful flesh, but He was a Prophet. David was a prophet and committed adultery with his neighbour's wife and murdered her husband. On account of that occasion he wrote a psalm as a sinner, but the words of him are beforehand placed in the mouth of the Lord Jesus (Ps. 51).

A sinner, but a Prophet. It perhaps does not concern His own private sins, but He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was a servant of God and was used by God. The power of God worked through Him, not because He was God but because He was a prophet. Thus He spoke the words of God and did the works of God.

He was tempted and suffered.

Suffered comes from the verb "to suffer" = submission.

He submitted Himself to the Word of God, to His heavenly Sender and thereby to His calling, for which He had come. He therefore suffered. That applies to us in the same way. We too are tempted, but we submit ourselves to the Word of God. We let ourselves be led and therefore we suffer and are patient.

He knows us and knows what it is to be a man and to live here on earth in a perishable world and moreover in a perishable body. In a world in which sin reigns and the power of Satan is great and in which all sorts of word of Satan comes to us through the word of men, to make us unfaithful to the truth and thus to the Word of God.

Heb. 4:15

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

If that temptation is there, then He will also with that temptation give the way of escape, that we may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13). In that He is therefore not only our Example, whom we should follow, but He is also the One who enables us to resist temptation.

Temptation is not merely temptation of the devil to entice us to sinful deeds, but temptation aims at our becoming unfaithful to the Word of God. As far as the "ordinary" sins are concerned, we have the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Those sins may be a problem for us, but not for God. The question is not whether we commit many sinful deeds, but whether we are faithful to the Word of God. There is only one sin on account of which a man is lost, both in the absolute and in the relative sense, namely that of unbelief. Everything God does, He does through His Word; unbelief is rejection of the Word of God and thus the rejection of the work of God.

He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without yielding to that temptation.

Heb. 5:1

For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins:

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Every = each.

Every = indefinite;

Each = definite. Then you know who or what they are.

2 Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity;

3 And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

The offering of gifts and sacrifices does not concern His crucifixion. His crucifixion was before He became High Priest, for He became that only in His resurrection. People are inclined to place the priesthood of Christ already before His death, so that His death can be reckoned to His priestly work. That is a misunderstanding, for the priest is not expected to die. That is not the work of the priest but the lot of all men, including the priests. They are prevented by death from continuing always.

Heb. 7:23 And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

There were under the old covenant many high priests, which does not mean that the old covenant thereby became stronger. There were indeed many high priests, but that was precisely because of their weakness. They all died. They were prevented by death from continuing always. It was therefore not the intention that they should die, but that they should live. Unfortunately they were prevented by death from living always. That is why the previous verse also says that Jesus is become the surety of a better testament.

Surety = Mediator = High Priest.

That better testament is the new covenant, under which He became High Priest after the power of an endless life (Heb. 7:16), on the basis of His endless life. He was the first man who received eternal life and therefore the first man who qualified for the priesthood after the order of Melchisedec, for priests were to continue always—that was the intention. The priesthood of Melchisedec is untransferable and imperishable, for it is after the power of an endless life.²⁴ But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

Not because He is and has eternal life and therefore remains High Priest, but the other way round. He has eternal life and therefore He received that imperishable priesthood, for priests were to continue always.

If the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of an offering that the Lord Jesus as High Priest brought, then that cannot concern His crucifixion. That is all the more impossible because the cross in the Bible is certainly not regarded as an altar but as a slaughter-place. That is the opposite of an altar. On the slaughter-place one is expected to die, while on the altar one is expected to live and even to come to life. The way of an offering animal is first death on the slaughter-place and then life on the altar. It is therefore death and resurrection. Animals that come to the slaughter-place are not offerings. They only become so if they afterwards perhaps come to the altar.

Although in our everyday language a sacrifice is associated with death, this cannot be justified biblically in any way. It is deeply rooted in our English language, but that rests upon a misunderstanding.

He was taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, drawing from the Old Testament

ordinances, particularly with regard to the work of the high priest on the Day of Atonement.

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity (Heb. 5:2). He is able to have compassion on our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:15), because he was in all points tempted like as we are. This also refers back to Hebrews 2:18, namely that in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. So all these ideas are closely connected, as this is the central theme.

He can have compassion on the ignorant and those who go astray, because he himself also is compassed with infirmity. He was crucified in weakness and raised in power. One does not say such things about Someone who, in His earthly walk, is regarded as God. In the days of His flesh He was in weakness and subject to temptation, which He nevertheless resisted.

Because of that weakness, the high priest had to offer for the sins of the people and also for himself. Chapter 5 does not elaborate further on this here, but the Old Testament high priest had to offer twice: once for himself and once for the people. Yet of the Lord Jesus Christ it is said that although He offered for Himself and for the people, it was only one offering. This expresses that He and His people are one. For we have become one plant with Him; we are one body, of which He is the Head; we are one with Christ and placed in Christ; we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ; Christ is the Church and the Church is Christ. Hence, one offering.

Hebrews 10:5

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me;

This is under the New Covenant. The idea is that under the New Covenant this High Priest offers once, and He offers Himself. In so doing, He also offers the body prepared for Him. That is the difference between the Old and the New Covenant.

Hebrews 10:10

By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

We are that body, and He has offered that body. Thus us—and it is but one offering: through Him, including His body. By this we are sanctified, that is, set apart for the service of God under the New Covenant, on the basis of and since the resurrection of Christ and His offering.

To offer = to present; to dedicate.

The word is used for presenting something to someone in high position, for example to a king, but especially when presenting something to God. We have been offered, that is, consecrated to the service of God. He did this by saying: "A body hast thou prepared me, and here am I, to do thy will." In that will we are therefore sanctified, for we are that body.

If one says that the Lord Jesus offered Himself on the cross at Golgotha, that need not be a problem, so long as one uses the word in its ordinary English (or everyday) sense. However, if one thinks that this offering is the offering as the Bible describes it in relation to the Lord Jesus, then one is quite mistaken, for the Bible never uses the term in that way. When the Bible speaks of the offering of Christ, it never refers to His death, but exclusively to His resurrection from the dead and His dedication to His heavenly Father. He is faithful to Him who appointed Him as High Priest, since His resurrection. He is

still, even now, faithful to Him who appointed Him. That means He remains subordinate to the Father. That must be so, otherwise it could no longer be called Son and Father.

Hebrews 5:4

And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.⁵ So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

This sonship therefore implies His priesthood. Sonship has to do with inheritance rights. Sonship takes on great significance when it comes to inheriting certain functions—something we have abolished because we consider it old-fashioned and medieval, but it is biblical.

For example, the function of kingship is simply inherited. The testator, the father, appoints his successor. The testator appoints the son. David did this on his deathbed. Adonijah thought he would inherit the throne, but that did not happen. David appointed Solomon as the son. Then nothing more could be done. It may be that Jacob was already designated by God before his birth as heir to Isaac, but it was not until Isaac laid hands on him and passed on the blessing of the firstborn that it became effective. One generation later, it was not Reuben who became the heir, but Ephraim, the youngest son of Joseph—through the crossing of hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh when giving the blessing of the firstborn. Thus Ephraim became the son of Jacob. Moreover, he did this as a prophet, so that God Himself says: “Israel is my son, even my firstborn” (referring to Ephraim).

So God said to the Lord Jesus Christ: Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee (Heb. 5:5, quoting Psalm 2:7). This statement is taken from Psalm 2:7 and is quoted three times in Hebrews. The “to day” makes it an official decree. That was on the day of His resurrection.

Hebrews 5:6

As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Quoted from Psalm 110:4. That too happened on the same “to day”. Although the words are different, it is the same thing. “Thou art my Son” means: Thou art My King, Thou art My High Priest, Thou art My Firstborn. Sonship, priesthood, and kingship are functions. All men are sons in the broad, common sense of the term. Yet many sons are also fathers. That is a function in relation to.... We are sons in relation to previous generations and fathers in relation to the next. They are therefore relative concepts, and one can be appointed to them. In the Old Testament, kings often had many sons. The question was always who would succeed the father on the throne. It was not automatically the eldest. He appointed one.

Thus the Lord Jesus was appointed. On what basis? And on what basis was the Lord Jesus raised? Here too we go astray in all sorts of explanations devised over time, for example to uphold certain doctrines about the Trinity. The standard answer to that question comes from Acts 2, where it says that death could not hold Him.

Why could death not hold Him? Because He was God, is the usual answer. But if that is so, why did He die? Since when can God die? God raised Him from the dead and then said: Thou art my Son, to day have I begotten thee.

He said: “Lazarus, come forth!” But did He not say that? Well, Lazarus is Eleazar in Hebrew, the son of Aaron, the second high priest under the Old Covenant, as a type of the first Priest under the New Covenant. The name Lazarus in the Bible is a symbolic

designation for the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec: the second high priesthood. The raising of Lazarus is a picture of the resurrection of Christ as High Priest. That is why the Lord Jesus was so deeply moved at Lazarus's tomb: Jesus wept. He stood, as it were, at His own grave, but then also at His own resurrection. That must have been profoundly emotional.

Acts 2:23

Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

Determinate counsel... = established counsel and foreknowledge of God.

Him, namely Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God (verse 22). A man of God; not 100% God for the others.

A man of God = a prophet.

Ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain. Oh no, it does not say "offered". They got rid of Him. That is not the same as offering.

Acts 2:24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

So He did not rise from the grave by His own power.

Having loosed the pains of death = death is described as "pains" or "bands".

Because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. Why could death not hold Him? What follows explains it.

Acts 2:25

For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. 28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

Why could death not hold Him? Here the thinking is not technical but causal in a biblical sense. We Westerners are stuck with wanting cause and effect in the technical sense. But there are very different ways of thinking than the causal. These are used much in the Bible. We usually get no further than concluding that if it is not causal, it is analogical thinking. Then one is a picture of the other, and so it is symbolism. And because the picture is true, the fulfilment of the picture is also true. There is no causal connection between them, yet when composing biblical doctrine, those connections are there. They are just not causal.

Why could death not hold Him? That has nothing to do with death or with Him. Death could not hold Him because God had said beforehand that He would raise Him from the dead.

And so He could not remain in death. The analogies from the various Scripture passages naturally lead us to the conclusion that the resurrection of the Messiah would take place on the third day, for the third day always brings deliverance, the return of what was lost, and the release of what was captive, and so on. That is a fixed pattern throughout the whole Bible. These things bring us again to the conclusion that the Bible truly is the Word of God, whatever others may say about it. If the Bible is the Word of God, you find that confirmed. You can compare Scripture with Scripture, and it will

prove that everything fits together into one whole. In that you recognise the hand of one Author. That is how we study the Bible: by regarding it as one whole.

Death could not hold Him because David, a thousand years earlier, had already said that it could not. David was a prophet and knew what he was talking about.

Death could not hold Him because that would contradict the revealed plan of God.

Why could the Jews not believe, despite the Lord Jesus doing so many signs? Because Isaiah had said they would not believe. There is no technical obstacle for any Jew to come to faith, but the idea that the Jewish people as a whole could come to faith is a step too far, because Isaiah said it would not happen. And so individual Jews do come to faith, but the Jews as a people do not. Thousands of Jews in and around Jerusalem came to faith, but the Sanhedrin, representing the whole people, wanted nothing to do with it. There you see the difference between the opinions and feelings of the people and the views and opinions of the government. You no longer need to explain to English people today that, despite democracy, there is often a great difference between the opinion of the people and that of the government.

David had indeed said that death could not hold the Lord Jesus, but what was the reason, the condition for that resurrection? On what basis was the Lord Jesus raised? On the basis of His obedience.

If He had already been God all the time on earth, then you can do nothing with that.

Obedience to whom? To Someone who was just as high and authoritative as Himself?

You could hardly call that obedience. Therefore the whole idea of the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ is incompatible with the doctrine of the Trinity. On the other hand, it confirms to us the submissive position of the Lord Jesus, at least during His life on earth. Back to Hebrews 5...

Hebrews 5:7

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

The main clause is: Who in the days of his flesh learned obedience by the things which he suffered. Shorter: Who in the days of his flesh learned obedience. Even shorter: Who learned obedience.

Was He disobedient before that? Not that we know, but He learned what it is to be obedient. We all have to learn that: to learn to be obedient.

Obedience = the inclination to hear; the disposition to listen.

In practice it means that you are inclined to submit to....

A serf is a slave. You are expected to listen to and obey your superior, your owner. You are then compelled to listen, with all the consequences. You must listen, and from that, commands may have to be carried out. That is obedience.

That is why believers are called obedient.

Obedient is in the Bible one of the synonyms for faith, and thus also for faithfulness (see Hebrews 3:16–19).

The Lord Jesus had to learn obedience. He was born, lay in the manger, sat on His mother's lap. He was a small hollow vessel that grew larger. As parents, when the vessel grows, you have to fill it somewhat. He had to learn things, whether from above or not.

That applies to every child, and thus to the Lord Jesus as well. He had to learn to live as

a Man. What is characteristic of human life? Not among other people, but as an individual human being living in this world?

Obedience, and in particular obedience to God. Man must learn that he is born in a subordinate position. The Preacher teaches that too: God is the One who speaks, and we listen. And if you take it into your head to speak to God, let your words be few. The Lord Jesus quotes it: “for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking” (Matthew 6:7).

Thus the Lord Jesus learned obedience as a Man, for it was in the days of His flesh. He learned that obedience through suffering, through the things which He suffered. Suffering does not really mean “enduring pain”, although it can be that, but that you are led. The leader goes ahead, and the one led follows. On the follower, words like “passivity” apply. He lets himself be led.

Another word for being led is “passion”. That presupposes passivity, although passion often involves enormous activity.

Being led is submission, and in that position one learns obedience. He said: “Not my will, but thine, be done.” He came to earth to do God’s will. When He rose from the dead, He was there again and said: “Here am I (again), to do thy will, O God.”

Hebrews 5:8

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered. He learned what it is to be obedient. For He was also tempted. That temptation was aimed at not being obedient. That temptation did not last only those 40 days, but right up to His crucifixion. Even then it was cried: “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross” (Matthew 27:40), but He did not do it. It was about submission, faith, faithfulness, obedience.

Our salvation comes from the faith of Jesus Christ. Through the faith of Jesus Christ we have been saved. That is what this is about too, though expressed in different words. Now the parenthetical sentences in verses 7 and 8. He offered up prayers and supplications in the days of His flesh, with strong crying and tears. The parenthesis also has a parenthesis. He wept and cried out aloud. He offered those prayers to Him who was able to save Him from death. In essence, these prayers were aimed at being delivered from death, from corruption in general. This refers to the many psalms in which you find these prayers. Psalm 16, which Peter quotes in Acts 2, is an example. Some psalms are entirely prayers; in others, part is prayer.

The Lord prayed much. We know that from the Bible. He often withdrew for that purpose. What He prayed we do not know, at least not from the Gospels. It is usually not recorded there. For that you have to go to the psalms.

There you can also read how He learned obedience through the things which He suffered.

Though He were a Son.... Was He not only made Son at His resurrection? But who was the son of Abraham? Isaac, you would say, but he was not for a long time, although before his birth his name was already mentioned and it was said that he would be that son. The same applies to Jacob. From birth he was the son in the sense that he was destined for it, would be appointed to it, but he only became it when Isaac gave him the blessing of the firstborn. That he was the son was anticipatory of the future.

“Though he were a Son” can equally well be translated as “though he would be a Son”.

In any case, the preceding verses say that He was only appointed Son at His resurrection, so that what is said in Hebrews 12 about us applied beforehand: that we

are chastised = educated. It says that this is no pleasant thing. If we endure that chastening, God deals with us as sons (Hebrews 12:7). Nevertheless, the Bible explicitly teaches that we will only be appointed sons at the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23;

1 Corinthians 15). As long as we are in a corruptible and perishable body, we cannot inherit, for corruption does not inherit incorruption, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable; therefore we must all be changed. The same happened with the Lord Jesus. He was appointed Son at His resurrection, and before that He was regarded as the One who would one day be the Son. That is why He could already be referred to as the Son in anticipation.

You can hang all sorts of theories on one statement, detached from any context and often also from everything else the Bible says about it, but then you end up with contradictory explanations and doctrines. Moreover, you are left with all those other statements that no longer fit. But if you lay all those statements side by side, it should pose no problem.

Even in that privileged position, in which He was called to the Messiahship, He learned obedience.

That is also an old principle. Someone called to rule must first learn to serve. If you want to become director of a large company, you must first work on the shop floor to know what goes on there.

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

And being made perfect = literally it says: and having been matured, in the sense of “having come to full growth”. Thereby He is indeed sanctified, for those things go together.

He learned obedience, and after that He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. How so? Well...

Hebrews 5:10

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

God gave Him that title and function at His resurrection.

The next verse indicates that these things seem difficult to understand. It is not really so difficult. What apparently makes it difficult is that it has nothing to do with our human life here on earth, but with us as believers who have been offered with Christ, sanctified, set in the heavenlies, and received citizenship there.

Everything connected with the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec is regarded as solid food. That is because it has nothing to do with this perishable world, but with imperishability and the New Covenant and, as far as we are concerned, in particular our heavenly position in it. Many believers have no interest in that, but hope that the Lord has interest in our earthly position. We, however, have received a heavenly position.

There is our home, and there is our walk.

The Lord said: “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). Those are not divine attributes, but those of a believer. Lowly and meek, namely submissive to God and His Word.

In Philippians 2 it therefore says that we should have that mind in us.

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. That mind must be learned.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus in His earthly walk. What mind is that? That of humility, of service. The whole epistle is about that.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant. The normal meaning is that He was then no longer in the form of God. He divested Himself of His deity and became Man. How that is to be explained? No idea. It is hard to explain. Nevertheless, that is how it stands here, so we accept that that is how it happened.

Made of no reputation = emptied, voided.

To lay aside is therefore not the right word, for that means taking off a garment, or removing the outer covering. Here it is not about removing the outside, but the inside.

Making His deity void of content. That is why it is called emptying.

He was the image of God = the expression of the essence of God, of what is in Him, His being. We are now speaking of the Jehovah of the Old Testament. He appears as the personification of the Godhead, who cannot be seen. Jehovah is the image of the invisible God. Behind or in the form that appears is the Godhead, expressing itself in that form. That was emptied, made void of content, and so only the form remains.

The punctuation in these verses rather lets us down. If we ignore it, then “thought it not robbery” is in the wrong place in the sentence. You can leave it, but then you must be willing to read it properly.

Equal with God = equal to God.

Equal = a comparison.

He was in the form of God and thus equal with God.

But He did not consider it robbery to empty Himself, to make Himself nothing.

When He appeared here on earth, His deity disappeared, His deity was nullified. He allowed His deity to be taken from Him, just as He had earlier given up His glory. This is a further phase in that. The final phase was at His crucifixion.

He was in the form of God and equal with God.

It is: the form of God versus the form of a man;

Equal with God versus made like men.

Not God, but a servant, as the contrast. He emptied Himself of His deity and became a servant. He was equal with God, but became a Man.

This also shows that man is by definition a servant, in the sense of a subordinate, a serf, a bondservant. We are subordinate to God and therefore servants. Christ took that position. Not that He played that role, for it was not play-acting. He fulfilled that function. If you play a role, you pretend; but if you fulfil a function, it is real.

Not disguised as a man, but being found in fashion as a man. In that position He humbled Himself still further.

And became obedient = He learned obedience, and that obedience brought Him to death. Not just any death, but the death of the cross. His path led ever downward, ever more humiliating. The Christian principle is therefore that the way to exaltation runs

downward. God ultimately exalts. We too shall be exalted, but after the pattern of the Lord Jesus. That is what this epistle is about.

It has been granted to us, for Christ's sake, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Philippians 1:29–30). In short, we need to learn patient endurance. In this, the example of the Lord Jesus is set before us—He who laid aside His high position, became obedient, and was humbled unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:9

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Wherefore God also = that path of humiliation was also under God's hand. Peter says: Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Peter 5:6). That path of humiliation was one of submission to God.

This is 100% in conflict with the doctrine of the Trinity, for in that doctrine the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are equal in rank. They are all three equally God. Be that as it may, God has highly exalted Him, but precisely because of that path, He has highly exalted Him. How?

God has given Him a name which is above every name. What name then did He receive? That of Jehovah. He did not bear that name before He died, nor did He bear it in His incarnation. The term "Lord Jesus" is therefore only introduced in Acts. In the Gospels He is simply called Jesus.

He received in His resurrection a name which is above every name...Philippians 2:10

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

If one were to translate the word "Lord" back into Hebrew, one would be bound to the name Jehovah.

These verses are taken literally from Isaiah 45:23. There it is plainly about Jehovah, yet those words are here applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, who (again) received that supreme name (Jehovah) in His resurrection.

Isaiah 45:21

Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Who has declared beforehand how things would later turn out? Who has spoken of future events? God speaks, and especially about things to come. God declares the future. We are expected to know the past anyway, but God declares the future. He has done so in the past, in such a way that much of what He had announced previously had already been fulfilled in Isaiah's day. That confirms His deity, but also that He is able to do what He has spoken and promised concerning the future.

Have not I the LORD? = a reference to the name LORD (in capitals), Jehovah, often translated as "I AM THAT I AM".

There is no God else beside me = apart from Me there is no God.

There is but one God, and whenever He makes Himself known in any way, there appears the Person (in the classic sense of that word) of Jehovah. When in the New Testament, after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God appears, it is still the Person of Jehovah who appears, yet that proves to be none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

A fine example of this is: whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered. Then they call on the name of the LORD, and He appears, and they ask Him: "What are those wounds in thine hands?" (Zechariah 12–14). Then it turns out He is Jesus of Nazareth. That is the answer to the question: "If then the Messiah be the son of David, how doth David in spirit call him Lord?" (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:43). He is indeed the Son of David, yet at the same time the personification of the Godhead. He is therefore Jehovah, for that is the name of the Godhead when He appears. Otherwise the Godhead is invisible and unknowable.

A just God and a Saviour. Who is the Saviour? Here it is Jehovah, while we know the Saviour as Jesus of Nazareth. Since His resurrection He is the bearer of the name that was given Him according to Philippians 2, when He was highly exalted and received a name above every name. In Hebrews 1:4 it says that He has inherited a more excellent name than the angels.

Isaiah 45:22

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

He has spoken, and it shall not be revoked. It stands.

He has spoken, namely that unto Him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall swear, as quoted in Philippians 2:10.

Before whom shall every knee bow? Before Jehovah.

When you read these verses, quoted by Paul in Philippians 2, before whom shall every knee bow? Before Jesus of Nazareth, the Risen One from the dead.

There is therefore no difference between them. There once was, but that was before His resurrection. Even in the Old Testament, incidentally, when Jehovah appears there, it is not Jesus who appears. That cannot be, for Jesus was born of Mary, of the line of David. So something has indeed changed. In the course of history something has been accomplished, through that path of obedience even to death. Thereby He has opened a new and living way to a new creation and to a new covenant. As far as the Church is concerned, He has prepared a new and living way beyond the veil, leading into heaven. Philippians 2:11

And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus Christ is that Lord.

The Jews are supposed to have one God, and we three. Well, it is rather more complicated. It looks like three, but it is one. From the Bible, however, we know only one God and only one throne. On that throne sits the Lamb, standing as it had been slain (Revelation 5:6), or the LORD, sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up (Isaiah 6:1). Insofar as we know a Second Person, namely in the relation of Father and Son, that Son is the express image of God's person and the brightness of His glory. God is the invisible God, and what is called the Son is the revelation of the Godhead to us. Insofar as we distinguish three, it is not side by side as equals, but vertically. God reveals Himself downward. We look up at His image, namely Jehovah. Since the resurrection we call Him the Lord Jesus Christ (= Messiah).

The Jews will have nothing to do with a triune God. They have but one God.

Nevertheless, if one looks more deeply, it becomes clear that Judaism does indeed

recognise the distinction between the invisible God and the revelation of the Godhead in the form and under the name of Jehovah.

They speak of the unknowable God, of whom it is taught that He cannot be described. In principle they describe Him negatively: He is not this, He is not that, He is not so, and so on. We do not know Him, for He is the unknowable God. Nevertheless, that unknowable God shows Himself, reveals Himself, in Jehovah, who is regarded not as God Himself but as the appearance of the Godhead, as the express image of God's person. Those are precisely the terms we have in the New Testament for the risen Christ.

It is that function of appearing as the Godhead (others call it a crystallisation or materialisation of the Godhead) that is accompanied by the name Jehovah. In Kampen they say that Jehovah is the name of the covenant God. That expression is not found in the Bible, but they are right. You just have to let them explain it. They then say that Jehovah is the name of God in His relation to man. That is therefore the name of the revelation of the Godhead, though that formulation does not fit the Nicene Creed.

That appearance is a theophany, an appearing of the Godhead. It is also called a Christophany, in the sense of a (pre-)appearing of Christ. Both are correct.

Since the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, however, when God appears or shall appear, He does not appear in a temporary form, but in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. When they shall look upon the Lord Himself (Zechariah 12), then, it says, they shall look upon me whom they have pierced. In short, Jehovah and Jesus are identified with one another as the expression of the essence of the Godhead. That is exactly how the Jews also teach it—not on the basis of the New Testament, but of the Old. They do not, however, apply it to Jesus of Nazareth, yet they do recognise that Jehovah is not the Godhead in Himself, but the revelation of the Godhead.

From the resurrection of Christ onward, that name is borne and that function fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth. That is why John in his visions sees on the highest throne the Lamb, standing (in the sense of risen) as it had been slain. In short, if we ever stand before God, we stand before the Lord Jesus Christ. For us that is when we appear before the judgment seat of Christ, but even on the last day, when the living and the dead must appear before the great white throne of God, they too appear before Christ. For to Him has been given all power in heaven and on earth.

He has been highly exalted. No further is possible, for then one reaches what is rather abstractly called the Godhead. These things have meaning, especially because it concerns a Man who suffered and died here and was raised from the dead as Man, to be the image of God. That is now the fulfilment of Genesis 1:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. He was the first man who definitively answered to that will or prophecy of God. The New Testament triumphantly declares: "He is the image of God." That would mean nothing if there had been others before who were also bearers of God's image.

Read the Scriptures and see whether these things are so, and the Lord will bless you.
2 Corinthians 5:21

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

He hath made him to be sin for us = sin here is the characteristic mark of man. The Lord Jesus became a sinner; He is sin. The Lord Jesus was made sin for us. Usually the sin of the Lord Jesus is explained away. He bore our sins. One must not bargain that down, but accept what the Bible says about it. If you bargain that down, you also bargain down

that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He stood in our place when He bore the sin of the world, but He was justified, and in Him we are justified. There too He stands in our place. Not for all mankind, but for believers. In His death He represents all mankind, but in His resurrection only believers. He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

He stood in our place when He was condemned, and now He represents us as believers, still, before God. He is our Head and our High Priest.

Just as He partook of our sin, so we have partaken of His righteousness. So stated it is a contrast, but one can also say: just as we partook of His sin, died and rose with Him, so likewise we partake of His righteousness. The contrast is then sin and righteousness. You find more such contrasts in Romans 5, where the comparison is made between Adam and Christ. There too it is taught who we have become in Christ. The old man has been put off, sin has been put away, and we are justified in Him whom God raised from the dead. He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Romans 4:25).

The purpose was that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

He was made sin; He was made a sinner and was numbered with the transgressors. The chief characteristic of man is named, but man himself is meant. Why? That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. That we might become new men. No longer Adamites, but Christians, so that God no longer reckons us in Adam, but in Christ. The most striking characteristic of that new man is not sin, but righteousness. And so Romans 5 begins: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God. Here in 2 Corinthians 5 you find essentially the same line of thought, for we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is a stronger expression. Not merely righteous, but righteousness. Not an adjective, but a noun. We should be conscious under all circumstances that we are the righteousness of God in Him. It may not feel like that, but that is how it is. Not to men, but to God. Before God we are righteous, for God has justified us in Christ. If Christ is righteous, well then, so are we, in Him. That is not on our personal merit, but on the personal merit of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Righteous One par excellence.

That is one of our blessings in Christ.

It is called the righteousness of God. Even though men may condemn us—and that happens—but before God it looks different, and He is the highest Judge there is. From that we must learn to live. That is how we should learn to see ourselves, but also how we should see our brothers and sisters, for God reckons not only you but also your brothers and sisters in that way.

Paul's self-denial

2 Corinthians 6:1-3

We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.

2 (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

3 Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed: but as the ministers of God...As if to say: if you have received grace, then it serves some purpose. Living by grace involves... and then follows a whole list.

You can therefore simply skip verse 2. The alternative is that you can read it and then skip it. That is what usually happens.

We live in the acceptable time. If we experience that time as acceptable, we take it for granted and read over it. If we do not now experience that time as acceptable, then the best thing is also to read over it.

The question is therefore why this verse stands here.

When a text from the Old Testament is quoted in the New, you must look it up. That is the intention: there, at that place, this is spoken of. In other words, in Isaiah 49 this present time is spoken of, here designated as the acceptable time and the day of salvation. We know a few other terms for this present time, namely

- the dispensation of the mystery (Ephesians 3:9);
- the dispensation of grace (Ephesians 3:2);
- the longsuffering of our Lord, which we should count as salvation (2 Peter 3:9);
- these last days (Hebrews 1:1), in distinction from the still future last days at the coming of Christ;

The expression is not only used but moreover quoted: For he saith.... In other words, we live in the days announced in Isaiah 49. That chapter is quite often quoted in the New Testament, where it says that the Messiah would be a light to the Gentiles, unto the ends of the earth.

Isaiah 49:8

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

The time of acceptance = the acceptable time;

In a day of salvation = the day of salvation.

Isaiah 49:9

That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.

And so on. These things are not included in 2 Corinthians 6. The emphasis in 2 Corinthians 6 is therefore on verse 8, and then only on the first half. In any case, that is what is quoted. 2 Corinthians 6 therefore says that we now live in the time of Isaiah 49:8. You can also read Isaiah 49 and then look up 2 Corinthians 6 and say: "Look, there it says that Isaiah 49 speaks of our time." That is of course also how it is. It hooks together. You must compare Scripture with Scripture, and these are precisely the circumstances in which you must do that.

And give thee for a covenant of the people = I will give thee to Brit Am, to establish the earth and to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. That therefore concerns the Messianic Kingdom. Well, the beginning of it. The establishment of it. We live in the first phase of the Kingdom of Christ. He has been crowned and is the King of righteousness, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. We are firstfruits of that Kingdom. We are a church of firstfruits and therefore called to sonship. If you take this across to 2 Corinthians 6, then you have the connection of the passage.

Paul therefore says: “Remember, we have become firstfruits of that Kingdom, and nobility obliges.” We have been called to sonship and should live to serve the Lord, who has indeed been raised from the dead and has become King and High Priest of the New Covenant. That carries consequences with it. We live in the days of the beginning of that Kingdom. Not of its revelation—that comes later—but it is nonetheless the Kingdom, in which we have a share. Let us read it once more...

Isaiah 49:8

Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

Who, then, is this “thee”? Two answers can be given. The most obvious is Christ. The other is Paul. That is so because he applies the verses from this chapter to himself. At any rate, verse 6 is applied by him to himself in Acts 13:47.

Paul is there in Antioch in Pisidia, in Asia Minor, on his first missionary journey, together with Barnabas. He preaches in the synagogues and says that God has fulfilled the promises made to the fathers unto us their children (the present generation), by raising up the Lord Jesus from the dead. Then it turns out that as soon as the Gentiles show interest and come in large numbers to hear the preaching, the Jews lose interest.

Judaism was invented during the exile to give the Jews their own identity. Judah—the two tribes—had paid little attention to the Lord over the centuries. Sometimes a little, sometimes none at all. The Lord put an end to that and sent His servant Nebuchadnezzar to carry away into captivity everything and everyone living in Judah. When they were in Babylon, they became strangers there. How now to preserve their national feelings and their own identity, so that they would not perish there? Then they invented a religion that suited them, which was meant to ensure that their identity as Jews would be preserved. They certainly did not, as soon as they were in exile, begin to serve the Lord. If that had been the case, they would not have done it that way and would have known it could not be done that way, for the Mosaic prescriptions are strictly speaking applicable only in the land of Canaan. It always says: “When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee...”

That all applied within the land and to the stranger within their gates. But now they were abroad and could not serve the Lord. Instead of a temple, they invented synagogues and so on. In short, Judaism as a religion was invented so that the people might derive their identity from it.

You naturally arrive at that thought if you take the trouble to occupy yourself with the Babylonian Talmud. That is the foundation of Judaism. Now that we are 2,500 years on, much has been added to it. When they returned to Canaan, the Jerusalem Talmud was added, though it is less decisive in doctrine. In any case, the Babylonian Talmud lies at the basis of Judaism. That is so generally known that people think the Bible too was written only in that period and that the oldest books of the Bible are therefore no older than the Babylonian exile. That is why people also think that Genesis 1 and 2 are borrowed from Babylonian creation stories, and the flood narrative from the Babylonian flood story and copied from it. The conclusion can then only be that the whole Bible is plagiarism, but for that very reason highly scientific.

It was therefore about preserving Jewish identity. That is why the Jewish writings are so arranged. You find rules for the conduct of Jews among themselves, with the note that those rules do not apply to relations with Gentiles, for that is something different.

Opponents of the Jews, antisemites, usually point to the racist character of the Talmud and of Judaism in general.

Be that as it may, what is described here in Isaiah 49 is that salvation would indeed come to the Jews, but they would reject it. You encounter that in Acts 13. When the Jews notice that salvation is going to the Gentiles, because they show great interest, they say that it is therefore not for them. If it is Gentile, it is not Jewish; and if it is Jewish, then it is not Gentile—at least by their standards. Then they become envious. Paul says about this...Acts 13:45 But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Envy in the Bible is the same as jealousy, with all the wretched consequences that follow. The Jews were also to be provoked to jealousy. Here it happens.

Acts 13:46

Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

47 For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.

Who has been set to be a light of the Gentiles? Paul, therefore.

Salvation = so that Paul might preach salvation among the Gentiles. Paul is identified with salvation. He is, as it were, salvation itself. Not at the highest level, for that is Christ. He is the Salvation, as Simeon said: “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation” (Luke 2:30). He held a baby in his arms. He looked at the baby and said: “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel” (Luke 2:30–32). Simeon quotes in Luke 2 exactly the same verses from Isaiah 49 that Paul quotes here.

Under Acts 13:47 there are three cross-references: Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6; and Luke 2:32. That must surely strike one. I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. Paul therefore applies that to himself in Acts 13.

Paul of the tribe of Benjamin, and Barnabas, who was called Joseph, so that you have Joseph and Benjamin side by side, with Joseph older than Benjamin.

Back to Isaiah, for there we read the simple but very significant words...

Isaiah 49:3

And said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified.

The One speaking is the Servant of the LORD.

Thou art my servant, O Israel. It could even have been: Thou art My Israelite Servant.

Whatever it says, it concerns the Lord Jesus. That cannot be mistaken.

Isaiah 49:4

Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the LORD, and my work with my God.

The Lord Himself speaks. He has been busy, has worked hard, but unfortunately it has not worked.

My judgment is with the LORD = the labourer is worthy of his hire, the Bible says. If that ever applies to anyone, then naturally to the Lord Himself.

Isaiah 49:5

And now, saith the LORD that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

The phrase “from the womb” is also applied to Paul in Galatians 1:15.

Jacob = it concerns the literal people of Israel. Naming Jacob before Israel is significant, because otherwise one might understand Israel to mean the Northern Kingdom.

The question is what the Lord ought to have done but apparently did not succeed in, for He says He has laboured in vain. What did not succeed? Gathering Israel. Because it is Jacob, it concerns all the tribes of Israel. In the prophecies, from Moses onward, we read of the gathering of Israel in Messianic times, but that gathering begins with Judah. When it concerns the future, in the revelation of the Kingdom of Christ, then that need pose no problem at all. Be that as it may, the timetable as we know it in the Bible with regard to the prophecies is now tied to Judah, to the Jewish people. The prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel concerns Judah and Jerusalem. When it concerns the gathering of the people Israel, Judah is always named first. There may be one or two exceptions. The Kingdom simply begins with a King, and the King is out of Judah.

The Lord Jesus would, in His first coming, gather Israel in general, beginning with Judah. Gather to the land? Men would turn to the Lord, and unto Him they would be gathered, with the result the literal gathering. So it is also in the Church. We come to the Lord and come to the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25), at the throne of grace, which ultimately results in our being gathered bodily as well in what we call the rapture of the Church.

That also applies to Israel. The people must first repent, among the Gentiles, and from there be brought back to the promised land.

The work of the Lord Jesus therefore failed. We also know how that came about: Judah would not, and then everything stops.

It therefore did not succeed, but does He now receive His reward? Yes, for: yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the LORD, and my God shall be my strength.

Glorious in the eyes of the LORD = receiving reward.

My God shall be my strength = My God shall glorify Me and give Me the power that belongs to that glory (great power and glory). In the next verse the reward is further explained...

Isaiah 49:6

And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.
7 Thus saith the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, Kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, for the LORD that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee.
8 Thus saith the LORD, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages;

And so on.

It was therefore not only about gathering Israel, but He was also given to be a light to the Gentiles, to be salvation unto the ends of the earth. Kings and princes would bow before Him and therefore before the LORD God, Jehovah. All through this Servant of the LORD,

by whom that would be accomplished in the days when Israel therefore will not let itself be gathered and is therefore not gathered. That can only be in our days, in which this Kingdom is hidden.

Of those days it is said: In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee. That day and that time are in our days, in which salvation has gone to the Gentiles and Israel has not let itself be gathered.

But if Israel will not let itself be gathered, who then is the priestly people to whom the responsibility has been given to preserve the Word of God? Indeed, it is true, it has gone to the Gentiles, but to which Gentiles specifically? It is the acceptable time; the time in which salvation as it were passes Israel by, in the sense that Israel does not let itself be gathered. Israel therefore remains in dispersion, yet nevertheless salvation goes to the Gentiles. Princes and peoples will bow before the Servant of the LORD (whole peoples would therefore repent). In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people—to whom? Where does the responsibility lie? The answer is: “I will give thee to Brit Am,” translated as: for a covenant of the people. What is that?

Am = people;

The people is called Brit. In those days there was only one people so called. That was the Phoenicians, or the Carthaginians. They are essentially the same peoples, only the year you attach to them differs. In practice it was the Carthaginians, the people of BRT = barat. From that comes the name of Britannia.

If you read it in New Testament days, you no longer think of the Carthaginians or Phoenicians, but of Britannia, for so the land was called in the days of the Romans.

I will give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages. It concerns a hidden form of the Messianic Kingdom and the restoration of Israel. Not by bringing them back from exile, but rather a religious restoration in exile. That this is what it concerns appears from the next verse...

Isaiah 49:9

That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness,
Shew yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all
high places.

The prisoners = the exiles, the captives.

To them that are in darkness = God has called us unto His marvellous light. That is what Peter wrote to the scattered of Israel.

They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places = they have gone away and are on the way and walk the paths across the world in their exile. There they shall feed. Not in the land, but abroad.

Isaiah 49:10

They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

11 And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

13 Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

Sinim = south.

The acceptable time is the time in which salvation has gone and been preached to the Gentiles. With success. That salvation rests, has its abode, in Brit Am, in Britannia. In those days we live, in which salvation is indeed realised, though not in Judah and not in Jerusalem, but among the Gentiles. They are pointed to their responsibility in this. Here especially the Corinthians.

Isaiah 42 runs very closely parallel to Isaiah 49. Not that the Lord Jesus has performed His labour, but that salvation would go to the colonies in the west (translated as “isles of the sea”). The word really means “colonies” = those who have settled elsewhere in separation. Sea is the same as the west. Thereby you get the reference to Brit Am. The first verses of Isaiah 61 are quoted by the Lord Jesus in the synagogue at Capernaum, where He does an extended Scripture reading.

It is headed: the acceptable year of the LORD. You probably recognise in that the acceptable time of the Lord.

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;

The anointing actually refers to the resurrection of Christ. Anointing is the depiction of receiving eternal life. As Peter said: Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:33). His resurrection corresponds to the anointing.

If you translate more freely, it says: The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because He has made me Messiah.

Messiah = the Anointed = Christ.

With the purpose of bringing glad tidings (= the Gospel) to the meek.

The meek = those with a receptive mind, with a receptive heart. Blessed are the meek, those who are willing to hear, those receptive to the Gospel.

He hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted. With the heart man believeth. The heart is broken, but is, so to speak, healed.

To proclaim liberty to the captives. To proclaim liberty to the exiles, the scattered of Israel. As happened in Philippi as a sign, where Paul and Silas were in prison and the prison simply opened. All the prisoners were free to go where they wished, but remained where they were. Salvation arrives in the exile among the ten tribes of Israel, but they remain where they were. Regathering requires first the repentance of Judah. According to the Bible that happens at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel. After that you still get the repentance of all Israel and the regathering of all twelve tribes.

And the opening of the prison to them that are bound = the same as proclaiming liberty to the captives. The prison opens. They are free, but in practice nothing changes, except that the glad tidings arrive there.

He hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek...

Isaiah 61:2

To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;

The acceptable year of the LORD corresponds to the acceptable time and the day of salvation from Isaiah 49:8.

Year in the root sense also means “a division.” In this case of time. Hence the word for year is the same as for tooth, with which you divide things.

To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. There the Lord Jesus stops reading in His Scripture reading in Luke 4. He stops there and then sits down. Thus far the Scripture reading, but it is in the middle of a sentence. The problem therefore is that He does not read the rest, but the rest of the passage does not apply either.

The acceptable year of the LORD refers to the division of time in our present days, while the day of vengeance of our God refers to a subsequent dispensation, namely the day of the LORD. There are 2,000 years between them.

This must be emphatically stated, because in 1 Thessalonians 4 the rapture of the Church is spoken of in connection with the coming of Christ. Some allow no seven years between them. In this verse the question is therefore whether you can have 2,000 years between them. There are plenty of examples in the Bible of enumerations with time in between. Certainly in the prophecies. It is a generally known fact. It actually belongs to the introduction to eschatology, the introduction to the explanation of the prophetic word, namely that in the prophecies certain events are sometimes listed one after another without stating how much time lies between them. The familiar example used is that from a distance you see the successive mountain peaks, but not the valleys between them. If you look from a distance, you cannot see that either.

Be that as it may, the day of vengeance of our God corresponds to the day of the LORD, the day of wrath, the day of thick darkness, and so on. That is still future, while now it is the proclaiming of the acceptable year of the Lord.

Isaiah 62 also speaks of our dispensation. It concerns the bridegroom and the bride, with Israel as the bride and Christ and the Church as the Bridegroom.

The point is that in the Old Testament we find prophecies that apply directly to the days in which we live. Those prophecies are by definition hidden. That is why many have difficulty with them. In general this arises from a complete lack of broad Bible knowledge and too little experience in studying the Bible. The Bible is now studied by at most a few individuals, and all others who occupy themselves with the Bible have other interests. Unfortunately.

Back to 2 Corinthians 6.

2 Corinthians 6:2

(For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.)

It is therefore not pointless that Paul refers to Old Testament Scripture passages. It was about whether, if you left out this verse, you would miss something. If you leave it out, you indeed do not notice it, but if you leave it in and follow the references, you suddenly understand much more. You get an entire backdrop placed behind what is brought forward here. What is brought forward is in itself rather superficial. As if to say: we give no offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed. That verse can always be used, for when someone gives expression to his ministry, there is always something that gives offence, whereby you can compel him to stop his ministry.

2 Corinthians 6:3

Giving no offence in any thing, that the ministry be not blamed:

You now know which ministry that is. The one in which salvation goes to the Gentiles and more specifically to Brit Am. Then of course you say that this concerns Corinth and therefore has nothing to do with Britannia. Well, Corinth lies in Achaia, but is originally Israelitish. Much could be told about that, but we shall leave it for now.

The ministry that goes to the ends of the earth and takes place in the acceptable year of the Lord should not be blamed. It concerns the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy and promises made by God in the past.

2 Corinthians 6:4

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses,

Later it says: making ourselves approved to the consciences of men. That means, offence may be taken at what is ministered, but Paul says that he nonetheless makes himself approved to the consciences of men. The problem is only that many people do not let their conscience fulfil its function. The conscience is supposed to recognise and acknowledge the truth, but some do not want that because it does not suit them. That touches on the greatest problem of mankind. Most people have no love for the truth because they cannot use it for their own purposes. The world would rather hold the truth in unrighteousness. They loved darkness rather than light. Yet where the truth is preached, through that preaching one makes oneself approved to the consciences of men, but unfortunately people in practice reject their conscience. They have seared it. In what follows Paul describes the circumstances in which he fulfils his ministry. They are in general not attractive.

2 Corinthians 6:5

In stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings;

So far everything has been negative, but now come the positive things.

Watchings = lying awake at night.

Fastings still belong to the negative things = lack of food.

2 Corinthians 6:6

By pureness, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned,

2 Corinthians 6:7

By the word of truth, by the power of God, by the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left,

The last is a reference to what we call the spiritual armour, which is also taken from Isaiah but which we encounter in the New Testament in Ephesians 6.

First came the negative things, then the positive, and now the contrasting things.

2 Corinthians 6:8 - 9

By honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report: as deceivers, and yet true;

9 As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed;

Honour and dishonour both cause problems. Paul writes of elders that they should not be novices, lest being lifted up with pride they fall into the condemnation of the devil. By evil report and good report. That has to do with the methods of the devil, which he uses to hinder the preaching of the Word of God. It always concerns slander. The Jews contradicted and blasphemed what was spoken by Paul.

As deceivers, and yet true = the intention is to lead people away from the way they themselves were going and to bring them onto the way of the Lord. For the ways and thoughts of the Lord are higher than those of man (Isaiah 55:9).

2 Corinthians 6:10

As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

These contrasts find their core in the twofold nature of man. Elsewhere it is called the inward conflict. These are things that stand opposite one another. We are freemen of the Lord, yet nonetheless slaves of Christ. It depends on which side you come from. You can be filthy rich on this earth and yet actually poor, but it can also be the other way round.

This is in particular the way of Paul. He set himself as an example. He could easily do that, because the Corinthians were fairly well informed about Paul's experiences and also about the fact that things did not always go well for him. They used that against him. They did not want him.

From verse 11 Paul says that the reverse is different. In their hearts there is no room for Paul, whereas in the heart of Paul there is ample room for the Corinthians.

No fellowship with unbelievers

2 Corinthians 6:11

O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged.

Paul says that he now speaks from within, that he shows the back of his tongue. He speaks of his own position, which is not normal, but in these epistles he does so. Later in this epistle he even apologises for it and then regards himself as foolish, because biblical preaching is not a preaching about who the preacher is, but about who Christ is. Nevertheless, Paul preaches himself here, but obviously as an example, just as the Lord Jesus also did: "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Our heart is enlarged = I am large-hearted.

2 Corinthians 6:12

Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.

Ye are not straitened in us = you have plenty of room in our heart.

But ye are straitened in your own bowels = you are narrow-hearted = small-minded.

If you are large-hearted, you also have understanding for others; you give others room to live and to think. If you are narrow-hearted, you lack that room and therefore also lack understanding for others. If you are narrow-hearted, you set yourself up as the standard for others. Curiously, Paul says that he is the standard for others, yet he is not narrow-hearted.

The Corinthians set themselves as the standard, and Paul does not fit their philosophy, nor their worldview, nor their way of life. That is why they do not want to listen to Paul.

Paul therefore hesitates to visit them and so writes them letters instead.

Bowels = the inward parts, the heart.

2 Corinthians 6:13

Now for a recompence in the same, (I speak as unto my children,) be ye also enlarged.

If you were like me, you too would be large-hearted. Then there would also be room for me in you, and thereby for what I have to tell you. That, indeed, is his frustration.

Frustration = narrowness, limitation.

Paul's name actually means "restricted and hindered." Here we find him as the hindered one, the obstructed one. He has powerful things to tell them. He says that more fully later in 2 Corinthians 12, but the Corinthians give him no opportunity to do so. Moreover, they are not interested. They are chiefly interested in the here and now, rather than in the future. In the preceding chapters Paul speaks precisely about that future. Our walk here and our service to the Lord determine our inheritance in the future. That is why we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. That is why he kept saying:

"Wherefore we labour," or "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord..." and so on.

He says that we have received the ministry of reconciliation. That applies not only to Paul but to the Church as a whole. The Church is the keeper and steward of the Word of God and is therefore a priestly people.

That is how it ought to be, and Paul says they ought to become rather more large-hearted.

2 Corinthians 6:14

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers = this has been cleverly explained away and turned into the idea that a believer may not marry an unbeliever. And so, if as a child of God you are married to a believer, then this verse no longer applies.

Marriage is not in view here at all. Moreover, if people do not want to abide by it, they pay no attention to the Bible anyway.

It is about the fact that we human beings are expected to carry something. That is called a yoke.

If, for example, you put a yoke on two oxen before a cart, they must be of like nature—not only in strength but also in temperament. They must somewhat match one another; otherwise it does not work.

Every person in the world is expected to carry something. We call that responsibility, but it is a yoke. You are stuck with it. Since the invention of socialism, however, we have placed responsibility with the government. If something goes wrong, the government gets the blame. But since the French Revolution we had already abolished the government. Since then everything is blamed on society. That is us. This means that if things go badly for you, I get the blame, and if things go badly for me, you get the blame—so in the end no one has any responsibility.

Be that as it may, in life you are supposed to have something to carry. If you have nothing to carry, what are you doing here? What then is the point of your life?

Man's fundamental responsibility is that he should seek God. That is not only the responsibility of every human being but also of believers. Especially us as believers.

People have turned it round and made it that God seeks us. That is only so because we

withdraw. It ought to be the other way round. We should seek Him, and then He makes Himself known. We should seek Him, though He be not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27). The Lord Jesus Himself said: Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. Our responsibility is that we should seek and therefore also find, and then knock at His door.

We should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. The problem is that the way we as believers bear responsibility in the world is directed differently from that of an unbeliever. That immediately makes cooperation with unbelievers, at any level, problematic. We have different aims and should serve the Lord and be sincerely directed towards the Lord. This means that it has an effect on the path we walk, on the decisions we make, and so on. We have different interests, and therefore it does not go together. Of course, you often cannot avoid it, but if there is no necessity and no need for it, then you should not do it. Do not share responsibility with unbelievers. You have different interests.

That is what it is about.

¹This is certainly not limited to marriage, although it applies primarily there. Yet the question is whether Paul is speaking about that here. Apart from that, marriage has in fact long since been abolished. People still use the word, but the word has lost its meaning. That is evident, for they use the word for what is called a wedding: "After their marriage they will probably have children." Normally you have children in marriage. First comes the wedding, then comes the marriage. For the tax authorities it is every man for himself in marriage. The thing itself no longer exists. There is also no longer anyone head of the marriage. Responsibility is shared, but that cannot work. That is a form of government in which two board members have full authority. That does not work. We have not even mentioned a marriage between two people of the same sex. Be that as it may, that is the world in which we live. You had therefore better not share responsibility with unbelievers. We belong to another world, with other principles. We know marriage from the Bible. Outside of that, no. Such a marriage outside is just nonsense. Marriage is a biblical institution, and if people will not know the God of the Bible, including the Bible, then you can agree among yourselves what you mean by marriage. If you have lost God, you have lost all standards, and then you have to make mutual agreements. The world is busy with that, negotiating. That makes life terribly complicated. It is better to have the Word of God. That is unshakeable. It does not pass away and is always valid. Then you know where you stand and what you must hold to. The biblical ideals lie very high for the natural man, but we should learn down here that all those ideals with which we entered the world are in any case too high, for perfection does not exist here. That is not meant cynically, for even though you know those ideals are unattainable, that does not mean you should abolish them. You must have something to reach for and to aim at. You must orient yourself, and for that you need prominent points in the landscape. So it is in life too: you must have fixed points within which to navigate.² Corinthians 6:14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?

Be not unequally yoked. That is the expression for putting on a garment. That is more or less what it is. You put it on like a garment and drag it around with you everywhere. The opposite is to put off.

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness = we are expected to be ministers of righteousness, which in practice amounts to serving God Himself and, within the framework of these chapters, the New Covenant. For He hath made us able ministers of the new testament (2 Corinthians 3:6). In the New Covenant the righteousness of God is revealed (Romans 3:21). We are ministers of that, and that should fill our lives. Therefore be not unequally yoked with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness?

You could substitute other words for those two. Righteousness goes with truth, and unrighteousness with falsehood. Those two have nothing in common. They are opposites. The one is light and the other darkness. Where light comes, darkness is driven away. Perhaps you could also say it the other way round.

Note that these are rhetorical questions. You do not need to answer them. It is self-evident. Even people on the level of the Corinthians should be able to understand this without more ado. "I speak as to wise men," he wrote in his first epistle, suggesting that they were not. There are people who always want to give a different answer to the simplest questions, just to be recalcitrant, to know better, to be interesting, to show themselves off.

And what communion hath light with darkness? Righteousness and unrighteousness correspond to light and darkness.

2 Corinthians 6:15

And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

Concord = fellowship.

Belial is the designation for the devil. However you derive the word and whatever its meaning in Hebrew, in application it is simply the devil.

We should serve Christ. The only alternative is to serve Belial. That must then be the devil.

What part hath he that believeth with an infidel? The believer serves Christ, walks in the light, and serves righteousness. The opposite applies to the unbeliever. He serves the god of this world, walks in darkness, and serves unrighteousness.

2 Corinthians 6:16

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Agreement, concord, fellowship, part.

What agreement hath the temple of God with idols? You immediately see that Belial is reckoned among the idols. He is the boss of them. The idols in the Bible are demons.

What the Gentiles sacrifice to idols, they sacrifice to demons. At the head of them stands the great boss, namely Belial, the old dragon, Satan, the devil, the tempter.

Where the world is atheistic and therefore does not believe in the existence of God, even there men serve idols. There they are led by these demons. Satan is the one who denies or opposes the deity of the Godhead. As things now appear, the world will soon

be united in one religion, but it is a religion in which no God is acknowledged. The leader is a man—the man of lawlessness. He is the Antichrist. We know the teachings of Maitreya. The question is whether Maitreya is God. The answer is that he is not God but man, yet the most evolved man. Even the devil adapts his terminology. He knows full well that evolution does not exist, but if you can use it, then you use lies in this dark world. Maitreya is the highest and most evolved man and therefore the most developed. He then comes as head of humanity to lead humanity, but in practice to oppress. In reality he is the devil cast down to earth. Then he appears, as every angel who appears on earth does, as a man. Then God has been set aside and replaced by the form of a corruptible man. Just so you are aware.

What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?

In case you had not understood, we are the temple of the living God. That is admittedly figurative language, and according to some you may draw no conclusions from it, but then you might as well close your Bible.

Since the temple is consecrated to the service of God, and therefore the whole Church is consecrated to the service of God, the Church should remain far from any connection or fellowship with idols.

In any case, unregenerate people are inspired by demons. They are driven by evil spirits (zeal). Do not be shocked; that is simply how it is. How do you think the devil rules the world? By imposing laws on that world? That will not work. He does it by influence. He does it in different ways among different kinds of people (peoples and races, though you are not allowed to say that nowadays). If such an unbeliever happens to be Roman Catholic, then the devil presents himself as Roman Catholic. Then you get apparitions of Saint Mary or Saint Anthony, weeping statues, and so on. If he wants to exert influence on Christians, he adapts to the respective denominations to which certain believers might perhaps be reckoned. In fact he does not care what you believe, as long as you do not come to submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and do not come to serve the New Covenant. And so he brings people to serve the Old Covenant. The teaching that the believer must live under the law is a thoroughly satanic teaching.

The serpent in the garden was the first theologian. He said that God did not mean what He said, and then explained how God really meant it. And off you go. Then you live under the law and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That is not only proved by the symbolism but also literally: the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. He who has the power of death is the devil. What does he use, then? The law. The law activates sin, and sin activates death. If the devil is the one who has (or had) the power of death, then he uses the law.

But we are the temple of the living God. Obviously under the New Covenant. As God hath said: I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

These statements are quoted from the Old Testament. There are three cross-references under this verse, but there could have been thirty. If you have nothing to do sometime, go and find out how often in the Old Testament it says: I will dwell in them and walk in them and be their God and they shall be my people. Then find out to whom it refers. It will turn out to be said of Israel, but often it is said of Israel but not Judah. Especially in the prophecies it is specifically said of the ten tribes of Israel.

Expressions such as Ammi and Lo-ammi are of course taken from Hosea 1, but are quoted in Romans 9 and 1 Peter 2. Those expressions do not concern Judah or the

Jewish people but specifically the ten tribes of Israel, who ultimately became Lo-ammi in the Assyrian exile but were officially made Ammi at the first coming of Christ, on account of the unbelief of the Jewish people. In that sense you can say that the Jewish people are now Lo-ammi. Nevertheless, the statements about Lo-ammi do not concern Judah but the ten tribes, who have now become Ammi.

Through 2 Corinthians 6:2 we came to Isaiah 49, where you find that whole ten-tribes issue. Now in this verse you come back to it.

Insofar as what is written here works out in practice, it naturally works out only in the Church, in believers.

That temple is a people that should serve God. A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people. Those are the words used at the original calling of Israel. These things are here applied to the Church, so that you get the same problem as in Romans 9–11. In Romans 8 it is said of the Church that we are called to sonship and to the birthright. But that was promised to Israel in the Old Testament. How then can it come to the Church? Here you have exactly the same. These are Old Testament words about Israel, but they are applied here to the Church. How then do these things come to the Church? Simply because the route jumps from Judah to Israel, the ten tribes, and the Church springs from there. The Church is built out of that. Not exclusively, but the right of the firstborn runs through Ephraim.

This kind of promise about a priestly people and that God would dwell in them rests indeed on promises in the Old Testament. Of course there are also people who say that the Church does not appear in the Old Testament because it is hidden there. The result of that teaching is that the Church in our dispensation has nothing to do with any prophecy or promise made by God in the Old Testament, and that the Church is also completely separate from what the Bible has prophesied from the Old Testament and even from the New about the coming of Christ and the revelation of His Kingdom. In other words, we are a little people whom God gathers out of this world. After that that little people disappears (when is not quite certain), and after that no one has ever heard of them again. We are then taken out and have nothing more to do with anything. Only the last epistles of Paul apply to us, and the rest is irrelevant.

Some go even further and have to admit that the three epistles they are left with (Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians) are largely based on Old Testament statements and therefore actually do not apply to us either. They say that Paul only received the truth about this present dispensation, or about the Church, after he had definitively laid down his pen. Then you have lost your whole Bible, and there is also no connection with this present time and what the Bible may say about it. Then you might as well not have had the Bible, and then you have nothing left. That is the consequence of that teaching, although many do not go that far. They also think that the Lord's Supper is not for them. They celebrate it, but actually it is not for them. They do it because they do not want to miss it. This illustrates that they do not take the truth very seriously.

Be that as it may, we are God's people, we are that temple. In our days the responsibility of this priestly people—to preserve the Word and to represent God and stand before His face—rests with the ten tribes of Israel in general, but in practice only with the believers from among them. That is the Church, of which we are part. Regardless of our descent, for when you come to faith you are simply added to that people.

We live out of the promises God has made. He has placed us in them.

That is why Paul in the first epistle to the Corinthians also uses the example of unbelieving Israel. He warns that we should not fall into the same example of unbelief. You know the history and you know where the snares and traps lie, what the problems are for such a priestly people. You are therefore warned.

The Lord would dwell in us, walk among us, and we would be His people.

To be His people therefore means: His priestly people, His purchased people, His possession. Peter quotes it and says that in practice it means that we should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Expressions such as building and establishing something on earth are not found.

Nowadays you hear much about the emptying of the churches and everything that is done to counteract that emptying. The church is doing badly, and people are worried about it. But what are you talking about? It is all human organisation. People say, of course, that the church consists of all believers, but that is inconsistent. They want to lay those two things on top of each other. They want to identify the body of Christ with human organisations. Then they build on the human organisation, and that is supposedly for the sake of that one general Christian church. But if you want to work on that one general Christian church, you should precisely keep your hands off all those churches with walls around them.

That in practice these things get mixed up is because people will not accept this biblical practice. We should not go along with that. We do no inter-church work. All our work is extra-ecclesiastical. We are not churchly, not even religious. We are extra-ecclesiastical, but very much believing. You need nothing more. You must be without, for that gives you room. Not only for us, but it also gives the Lord room to do His work. If we fence something off, we fence off the Lord's territory. If you place yourself or others under a law, you place Christ under a law. You cannot place Him under a law, can you? He lives in us, and you must give Him room and not say beforehand that He may work in you, but only within certain limits.

There are also organisations that focus specially on something. Why? Is the Bible not limited either? Of course, it may be that someone has a specific ministry or calling.

Fine, let him do that, but as soon as that becomes the aim of an organisation that presents itself as such...It should dawn on us that we are a priestly people and that we individually as priests are responsible for carrying a yoke, which, the Lord Jesus said, is easy and light. You had better not share that with someone who holds a different view of life. On the other hand, there are of course also many believers who have a different view of life and are not intent on serving the Lord. That too is an unequal yoke.²

Corinthians 6:16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

For ye are the temple of the living God. God is expected to dwell in a temple, whatever that may be.

Under this verse are cross-references to Exodus 29:45, Leviticus 26:11, and Ezekiel 37:26. The last is rather interesting, for Ezekiel 37 is the prophecy of the valley of dry bones. Shall these bones live? Thou knowest, O Lord. In verse 11 it says that these bones are the whole house of Israel. Then from verse 16 comes an explanation, also in the form of a prophecy.

Ezekiel 37:16

Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions:

Two sticks. The one stands for Judah and the two-tribes kingdom, and the other for Joseph, also called Ephraim, the ten-tribes kingdom. With both it says: and their companions. So all who belong to them. That may be other Gentiles, or people of the ten tribes living among the two tribes, or vice versa. Then it says...

Ezekiel 37:17

And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand.

18 And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these?

Say then that you will not do so, for that has nothing to do with your personal salvation anyway. Moreover, it is not part of the generally transmitted Christian tradition and is not in the creeds. Besides, the church fathers never wrote about it either.

Of course he did not say that. He said...

Ezekiel 37:19

Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand.

Ephraim was the firstborn of Joseph. In practice they are therefore the same. Those names are also used interchangeably.

Ezekiel 37:20

And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes.

21 And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

22 And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all:

Here therefore it speaks of the unification of Israel in the future. When this happens is clear, for it is stated. The Kingdom will be under one King and therefore it will be at the coming of Christ. The two houses of Israel will then become one again.

That therefore never happened in the past, although there are people who claim that it did happen in the past and that “the Jews” is the same as “all the tribes of Israel.” Those who want to get rid of the biblical teaching that God is carrying out a plan in our days with regard to the ten tribes of Israel have invented that the two houses already became one in the past. The Bible teaches, however, that those two will become one again in the future.

Ezekiel 37:23

Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.

Detestable things = idols.

2 Corinthians 6 does not refer to this verse, but of course it belongs with it.

Ezekiel 37:24

And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.

In practice that is of course the Son and Heir of David, the Lord Jesus Christ. You can also read it as: And My beloved Servant shall be King over them. That is a play on the name David = Beloved. The emphasis then lies not on David but on Servant. The Servant shall be King, after all.

That is a fixed theme in the prophecies.

They shall all have one shepherd. Now you also know how it is with the good Shepherd, who still had sheep that were of another fold (John 10:16). The fold was the Jewish people, but the Lord said that He had other sheep that were not of that fold. Those sheep shall be brought together, and so all Israel shall be under one Shepherd.

Ezekiel 37:25

And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.

This concerns the unshakeable Kingdom that the Son of David would receive (see 2 Samuel 7).

Ezekiel 37:26

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore.

27 My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

This is referred to in 2 Corinthians 6:16.

Ezekiel 37:28

And the heathen shall know that I the LORD do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

This prophecy, when you read it here in Ezekiel, speaks of the second coming of Christ (though that concept does not really appear as such in the Old Testament), when He will come to unite the two houses of Israel and be King over all Israel, over all the tribes. Yet we should read the Old Testament in the light of the New, and the New Testament points back to the Old. Thus statements from this chapter are applied to our present time. The New Testament therefore says that this prophecy applies to our days, in anticipation of the coming of Christ. Of course, you can point out that it says the Lord will be King, yet He is not yet King over all the tribes of Israel. Nor are all the things mentioned realised from one moment to the next. It happens in a certain process: first this, then that, and so on. We know that too, for if we have learned anything about the revelation of the Kingdom of Christ, we first read of a period of seven years directly connected with it, but in which the Lord has not yet appeared as King. That seventieth week of Daniel must lead to the official repentance of the Jewish people as a people, but that is not yet all Israel, for Israel consists of more tribes than Judah alone.

Moreover, when the Lord comes at the repentance of the Jewish people at the end of the seventieth week, He does not come to Jerusalem to sit on the throne of His father David. There are many reasons for that. In the first place, there is no possibility of sitting,

because Jerusalem no longer exists—it has just been destroyed. So there is no throne of David either, at least not in Jerusalem. The Lord will then make Himself known to the remnant of the Jewish people in the wilderness of Edom. In short, that still takes time. We also learn that in connection with the establishment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth, 144,000 Jehovah's Witnesses must preach the Gospel throughout the whole world—12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (Revelation 7:1–8). Then you will first have to locate those tribes in such a way that they know who they are. Moreover, they must also come to faith, for if they have not come to faith, they can hardly be servants of God to preach the Gospel to the rest of the nations. All these things take a great deal of time.

Before the Lord establishes His Kingdom, He first forms a council of elders, also called a church of firstfruits. In short, an ecclesia that is enrolled in heaven, which will share with Him in His glory and therefore also in His judgements, and so on. That is the Church of this present time. We are firstfruits, and the formation of those firstfruits takes quite a long time.

Before the Lord deals with the nations, He deals with the repentance and unification of Israel, but before that happens, He first gathers to Himself a church of firstfruits. Before the harvest takes place, the firstfruits of the harvest are first gathered, processed, and presented (made alive) into the hands of the priests and before the face of the Lord. Only after that, the next day, as it says, comes the harvest. By our standards the harvest of the firstfruits takes an awfully long time, but Peter says about that that the Lord is longsuffering toward us, and that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8–9).

In other words, this prophecy from Ezekiel 37 is being fulfilled exactly in the manner described here. It is being realised in the days of the coming of Christ, but those are also forty years. That does not alter the fact that a beginning has already been made in our days.

These principles apply to all the things the New Testament teaches us about this present time. It is an anticipation of what will still happen in the future. This is the very first beginning of it. The beginning is the repentance of Israel and the appointment of a believing remnant in the service of God, but in preparation for that God first gathers to Himself a people from the Gentiles, which therefore is not specifically Jewish, but primarily comes from the ten tribes of Israel. Not explicitly, but officially. He therefore gathers the Church from all the tribes of Israel, with the emphasis on the ten tribes. That is what this is about, and therefore this prophecy also applies in our days.

For He had yet other sheep that were not of this fold (the Jewish fold), which must hear His voice. That will definitively be fulfilled in the days of the coming of Christ, but the fulfilment of it has long since begun, even though it is the first part and the firstfruit of the harvest disappears to heaven, promoted to firstborn and to firstfruits.

On the day of Pentecost Peter delivers a Scripture reading from Joel, which we all know must still be fulfilled in the future. It shall come to pass in those days that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your old men shall dream dreams, and so on. There shall be signs in heaven and on earth before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes. Later we learn from Paul that that day has still not begun. That it is all still future. Did Peter then know what he was talking about? The ultra-dispensationalist says that Peter indeed did not know what he was talking about, with the consequence that we need not read Peter's epistles either, since he did not know what he was talking about anyway.

Peter, however, knew full well what he was talking about. The Lord will certainly not pour out His Spirit on all flesh all at once, pat-bang. Moreover, the Bible also teaches that that Spirit is poured out only on someone who believes. Peter says that God has poured out that promised Spirit on the Lord Jesus, with the result that He rose from the dead. Further it says that everyone who believes in Him receives that same Spirit of promise: For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off (Acts 2:39). The Lord would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, but the waiting was for the Lord Jesus, who as the First would receive that Spirit, with the result His birthright, kingship, priesthood, and so on. After that that Spirit would be poured out on everyone who believes. Peter therefore says that this has already begun. In Joel it concerns the future, but that future has long since begun. Today too. If someone comes to faith today, he receives the Holy Spirit today. Except, of course, in the Pentecostal church. (So make sure under whose preaching you come to faith.) If you come to faith, you receive the Holy Spirit. God does that, and He has said so. At any rate it continues until the rapture of the Church, but also afterwards, if after the rapture of the Church someone comes to faith. Then two witnesses will be sent who will preach the Gospel in the streets of Jerusalem. Those too who come to faith after the rapture of the Church receive the Holy Spirit. Is that new then? No, it is still the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2. That has been in operation for 2,000 years.

As regards Zechariah 12 (I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem), that is at the end of the seventieth week. Jerusalem then has very few inhabitants left, for the simple reason that most people will have been killed at the destruction of Jerusalem, at the end of three and a half years of tribulation over the Jewish state. Nevertheless, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also relevant in our days. That continues. If in the thousand years people are born, they are born just as great sinners as you and I. Those people must also grow up and come to faith. If they do, they too receive the Holy Spirit. That continues right up to the last day.

Although you can say that in Joel 2 it specifically concerns the second half of the seventieth week of Daniel, the New Testament teaches that those things began long before that time. The whole calling of the Church certainly falls within the framework of the calling of Israel. We are firstborn of Israel. We are now the believing remnant from Israel. That means we are firstfruits of what will become general in the future.

You must learn that. You read the prophecy in the Old Testament and place it in the framework in which it stands there, but then the New Testament follows. That says that certain matters take far longer than as you read them in the Old Testament. Quite apart from the fact that, certainly in Daniel but also in other prophecies, you experience the prophecy being interrupted. Usually the prophet then falls asleep for a moment, after which the angel touches him and sets him on his feet, and then the story continues.

Then you know you have missed something. What you have missed concerns our dispensation of the mystery. The New Testament fills in what you missed. That is why the New Testament says that certain matters in the Old Testament are hidden. That does not mean they are not there, but that they are there, yet hidden. And so in the New Testament you get this kind of Scripture references to the Old. They almost always concern Israel, but in the New Testament they are applied to the Church.

From that people have superficially drawn the general conclusion that the church has taken the place of Israel, but that is a one-sided conclusion, for the Old Testament teaches that those prophecies will indeed be literally fulfilled to Israel, especially also in

the future. That does not alter the fact that in our days they already apply to what we call the Church. That that Church is also Israelitish in character by earthly standards has been completely and systematically suppressed.

If you delve into the ancient history of England, you lose the trail. You are in fact reasoned back into confusion. History begins at the earliest in the fifth century. There you get the mystical figure of King Arthur. Everything before that is nonsense. You must understand that you are then confronted with the history of the Angles and Saxons, who only arrived in Britannia in the fifth or sixth century, but the Angles and Saxons try to reason away the history of the Britons. That is done very consciously and systematically. They do not want to know what comes before King Arthur and explain it away. That is why we no longer know how it was with the first centuries of our era and the spread and planting of the Gospel.

That is a pity, for a great deal is really known about it, but that is also not popular in England itself. People do not want to know it, for the Angles and Saxons brought civilisation to those ancient Celtic islands, is their idea. In reality they completely destroyed the civilisation that was there, after which that civilisation indeed had to be rebuilt. That is why Augustine was sent to Britannia in 598 by Pope Gregory to preach the Gospel there and establish Christianity. Indeed, among the Angles and Saxons, but they were the ones who helped Christianity to ruin when they conquered Britannia during the great migration of peoples. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic Church does teach that Britannia was the first country to receive and accept the Gospel. Britannia is also regarded in the Roman Catholic tradition as the first Christian country in the world.

People say that the Anglican Church was founded by Henry VIII because he had difficulty getting his divorces through. The pope did not agree with his divorce, whereupon Henry VIII made the church independent of Rome. That is how it is told, but that is not how it was. Henry VIII wanted to please the pope, but...

"if he does not agree with that divorce, then so be it, for we here have nothing whatever to do with Rome. Our church is the oldest in the world, while the title pope was only used in the sixth century to designate the bishop of Rome, and only in 1075 did Gregory VII declare that that title might be used only for the bishop of Rome."

The bishop of Rome was only later promoted and made head of the Catholic Church. Be that as it may, the English church is the oldest and most original church in the world.

The English themselves have reasoned that away and do not want to know it. They have also invented that since then the British sovereign is head of the church, but from the beginning the British church was under the leadership of the British sovereign. That was even so when that British sovereign still lived in Rome, in the days of Paul. They do not teach you that at school, but that is why it is known. People just do not want to know it. If you know this, you also understand that the Church is indeed Israelitish in character, for those ancient Britons are descendants of the ten tribes of Israel. Those things can also be demonstrated from the Bible.

Israel is called in the Bible the covenant people. Britain = covenant people. A Brit is therefore someone who has a share in the covenant. Historically the Britons derive their name from Brutus, who in the days of Saul and David went to Britannia and there gave the land and people its name. Brutus is the Hellenised form of the Hebrew Brit. It was also the name of the Phoenicians and of the Carthaginians and of the Parthians.

This is a very solid and also historical basis for applying these prophecies about Israel to the Church in our days, though it must be said that the ultimate fulfilment will still be

somewhere in the future. Read also Ephesians 2:11 ff., where it says that believers from the Gentiles (the Ephesians were Celts) are built upon the same foundation of the apostles and prophets on which Judah is also built. The Gentiles are fellowheirs of the promises in Christ. If you understand that it has something to do with Ezekiel 37, then that makes rapid progress. Then you also understand that ye who were Gentiles in the flesh, who were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world are now no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

At any rate you must remember that we are that temple of God and are called to serve God. That is why we should not take on a yoke with unbelievers. Even more strongly...

2 Corinthians 6:17

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Taken from Isaiah 52:11. Here too, therefore, a prophecy about Israel is applied to the Church.

2 Corinthians 6:18

And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

Taken from Jeremiah 31:1. That verse actually still belongs with Jeremiah 30. There too it concerns Israel. We have already received a share in those things, even though you can prove a hundred times from the Old Testament that it will only be fulfilled in the future. From the New Testament you therefore prove that it is already the case. It is just not yet complete.

2 Corinthians 7:1

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Paul therefore applies these promises to this present time and thus to the Church. The conclusion is that the calling and forming of the Church in our days is indeed the fulfilment of promises made to Israel. Even to a very important degree, because it concerns a church of firstborn ones.

Having therefore these promises—this connects with the usual Gospel preaching in the New Testament, namely that God has fulfilled the promises He made to the fathers unto us their children, in that He raised up Jesus (Acts 13:32).

Because we have these promises, let us cleanse ourselves... It could just as well have said: Let us walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called. If you know what our position as the temple of God is, in which the Lord would dwell, then conduct yourselves accordingly. That temple is expected to be clean, in contrast to the world. Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. That means, in practice we should not take on another yoke with unbelievers. It is not merely about ensuring that our hearts and consciences are cleansed, for we cannot do that anyway. Nor does it mean that we should walk in a certain decent manner, individually and for ourselves. Those are other matters and are discussed elsewhere. Here it is about not walking according to the world and not according to

worldly principles. You should therefore not organise a local church according to principles applied in the world. That will not work. It always ends in mutual strife between people who envy one another. That is why the future World Kingdom of Christ is organised in the same way as the Church is organised. By God, namely, and on the basis of regeneration and on the basis of submission to the Lord and His Word.

Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Perfecting = completing, but it could just as well have been translated as: continuing, carrying on.

Holiness = dedication to God. It is not the meaning, but it does imply separation from the service of others and therefore separation from the god of this age, the devil.

In the Christian Evangelical tradition sanctification is explained as setting apart, but that is far too negative. It is precisely the opposite.

“Holiness” is a wrong pronunciation of “wholeness.” The “i” after the “e” only wants to make the “e” longer.

Sanctification is therefore wholeness, connection with, in English. In the original language it means unification with and thereby dedication to.

That places the expression “I am the LORD that healeth thee” in a different light from what we are used to. It means that through Him we are reconciled to God, made whole, and dedicated to God.

Sanctification is one of the fixed subjects in the New Testament epistles, because naturally they concern believers. We who have served idols have turned from them to serve the living God. We must learn that. Not only how to do it in practice, but first of all to view things in life that way. We should become conscious of who we are and consciously orient ourselves to the Lord. The next two chapters are also about that, though at a relatively low level. Actually the whole rest of the epistle is about that, namely the dedication of the believer in general to the Lord. It then turns out not to be such a spiritual matter, but a very down-to-earth, carnal, materialistic one. Be that as it may, perhaps it begins there. The next chapters are namely about the collection. It is then headed: The joy of Paul over the coming of Titus, but it seems far more as though Paul is shying away from his subject and lingering in his joy over the coming of Titus. Only then does he come to where he needs to be, and once he is there he can hardly get out again. It seems as though he gets stuck in it. That often happens too, for once you get into preaching about the earthly things of everyday life, the chance is great that you will never get out again, because you are never finished with it. You sink into it. That happens to Paul here too, and that is undoubtedly for our instruction. To put it irreverently, it is nagging. It all takes so long. They are such difficult sentences, which then also have to be explained, while you could probably just skip them, but they are in the Bible after all. That all sounds very tedious, but if we were to discuss the book of Job, it would come to much the same thing.

Once you get into considering what is earthly and have to listen to all that nagging from your friends (who mean well) and then also have to answer them at their level, namely highly scientific and philosophical, then you never get out again. That is exactly the thrust of the book of Job; for you can nag as much as you like, consider and deliberate as much as you like, send the great thinkers of the world to it—why human suffering exists—but the answer will be that it leads to nothing and serves nothing. The nature of human existence in general arises from spiritual things over which we have no influence

at all. From the conflict in heaven, and that is it. That applies in particular to the life of believers, for Job was a believer.

What is demonstrated in the epistles to the Corinthians is that if you get onto their level, immerse yourself in it and adapt to it, you get this kind of exposition. Paul says he adapts to them. Hence.

The joy of Paul over the coming of Titus

2 Corinthians 7:2

Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man.

Make room for us, give us space. For the Corinthians were narrow in their bowels. They were narrow-hearted. There was no room for Paul in their hearts.

We have wronged no man and therefore have done no one injustice. We have corrupted no one and have sought no one's gain. In other words, we have proved ourselves trustworthy.

2 Corinthians 7:3

I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

That is exactly what it is. It is a condemnation of the Corinthians, for they are narrow-hearted. Paul and his companions are not welcome among them. The reason for that is simple: the Corinthians are not receptive to the message of Paul and his companions. He preached that the Corinthians should not take on another yoke with unbelievers, but that they should rather go forth outside the camp, bearing His reproach; seeking the things which are above and not the things on the earth. That is his preaching, and the Corinthians do not like it, for they prefer to live in the here and now.

Paul has nothing against them, for they are in his heart. That is one of the aspects of this whole affair: on the one hand the resistance the Corinthians have against Paul, and on the other the affection Paul has for the Corinthians. He has a soft spot for them.

Humanly speaking, he could probably understand them very well. That would be quite possible for someone who lived so many years under the law, which kept him focused on earthly life. He must have been able to identify quite well with the earthly orientation of those Corinthians.

Apart from that, this kind of language in which Paul expresses his bond with a local church is found only in these epistles to Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul says that besides the things which are without, that which cometh upon him daily, the care of all the churches. In other words, the care he has for the Corinthians is not unique. He has that care for all the churches, but it does not come to the fore elsewhere in the same way. In some cases not at all. That it does come to the fore here is because, naturally, it is a one-sided matter. Paul loves the Corinthians, but that love is not reciprocated by them.

I speak not this to condemn you: for I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.

If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it.

2 Corinthians 7:4

Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

In speaking toward you, not to you. That would be contrary to what follows later.

Because he has so much boldness in speaking toward the Corinthians, we now have this epistle.

On the other hand, he is filled with comfort and is exceeding joyful in all his tribulation.

That naturally has to do with how this church in Corinth came into being and how the Gospel found entrance there. Perhaps also much boasting, because they were also very active. At any rate they had zeal toward God, though whether it was according to knowledge is still very much open to question.

That joy of Paul also certainly has to do with the coming of Titus and with Titus having been in Corinth and reporting back to Paul about it. He had brought good news, apparently because the Corinthians had after all given some heed to his first epistle to them. Things were moving forward, and that was encouraging for Paul. That is positive in itself, but all these things are naturally relative.

2 Corinthians 7:5

For, when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears.

This is a reference to Acts 16:19, 23. He is then in Philippi. That is on his second missionary journey, which turned out rather differently from what was intended. He could go no further and so crossed over to Philippi.

When they were there, they had no rest, for they were troubled. Without were fightings, and within were fears...

2 Corinthians 7:6

Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus;

Cast down = humbled, afflicted. God comforted them by the coming of Titus from Corinth.

2 Corinthians 7:7

And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more.

Paul stumbles here over the word consolation. Once he mentions consolation, the word comes up several more times immediately, just as in the first epistle to the Corinthians. Consolation = strengthening, encouragement, life under the New Covenant.

Paul has to speak here on such a low level that he says he is rejoiced by the coming of Titus. Well, not only by his coming, but also by what he has told them. But if that has to be added in order to rejoice, then you are operating on a very "low" level indeed.

He told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me. How do you show fervent mind toward the apostle Paul from a distance? As long as he is at a distance, they are quite willing to be zealous for him, but they will not do so if Paul comes.

That is how these things work. It is still so today. If you keep your distance, you have no problems, but if you come too close, friction and hostility arise.

2 Corinthians 7:8

For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not repent, though I did repent: for I perceive that the same epistle hath made you sorry, though it were but for a season. There is no reason to think of any other epistle than the first epistle to the Corinthians. In it he went rather hard at them, but he does not repent of it, though he did repent. How can that be? Did he first regret it and then not? That is probably it. You can have some reluctance about having to do certain things, but you have to do them, whether you like it or not. Once you have done them, you wonder whether you did the right thing. You should let go of such things as quickly as possible. Sometimes it just has to be done. Be that as it may, it was not pleasant for the Corinthians to receive such a letter either, but...

2 Corinthians 7:9

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. Were they sorry or not? Apparently that letter from Paul gave them quite a shock and probably set them thinking too. Perhaps it also made them critical of themselves and influenced their behaviour. It is a bit like the Reformation, when the Roman Catholic Church was taken to task. That led to the Counter-Reformation. That is to say, they adapted for a while, but the fire gradually died down again. That is all strategy. In reality nothing had changed at all, and in time the Reformation was simply reabsorbed by the Roman Catholic Church.

That is probably how it went with the Corinthians too. They were indeed shocked and adjusted certain things, but that was probably as far as it went.

Ye were made sorry after a godly sort, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. Of course it could also have happened that such a letter came across completely wrongly, so that it had a negative effect. Through Titus's report Paul ascertains that his letter has at least had some positive effect. And so they suffered no damage from the letter. They may have suffered no damage from it, but the intention was that they should gain profit from it.

They were made sorry after a godly sort...

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death.

They were therefore not made sorry toward the world, but toward God.

2 Corinthians 7:11

For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.

It has made them active after all.

Revenge can also be positive, in the sense of retribution. That is why God is also a God of vengeance, in which vengeance is the setting right of what is wrong.

In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter. That letter from Paul and the criticism he had of them stirred up quite a lot. When you provoke the flesh, the first reaction is usually panic. A bit of life experience, or upbringing or habituation, ensures that no panic reaction occurs, because reflexes make everything go right anyway. But that is through habituation. If that is not there, panic arises. You can observe that very well in animals. Animals do not think. If you threaten them, a panic reaction occurs. That is the same with people. With people who cannot get their act together, you also get the strangest reactions. Those are often impressive to the outsider, but the expert knows that it takes very little to calm that panic reaction again. That is how it goes, and that is probably how it went here. They received and read a letter. Then there was trouble in the camp. Those feelings are discussed here. The letter apparently had reasonably good effect. At any rate action was taken.

2 Corinthians 7:12

Wherefore, though I wrote unto you, I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.

Here you find exactly what is also the case with this epistle. It says it about the previous epistle, but the Corinthians should at any rate understand that Paul is involved with them. You can immediately apply the verse to this epistle as well. With many words the same thing is then said in what follows.

2 Corinthians 7:13

Therefore we were comforted in your comfort: yea, and exceedingly the more joyed we for the joy of Titus, because his spirit was refreshed by you all.

Paul is glad about the coming of Titus and glad that he heard good news from Titus about the church in Corinth. So Paul is glad about the church in Corinth, and he is also glad for and through Titus, who could bring such good news. It sounds like a missionary newsletter.

2 Corinthians 7:14

For if I have boasted any thing to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found a truth. Not only Titus has been gladdened, but Paul now too, for he had spoken rather highly of the Corinthians to Titus, and Titus was not disappointed, and so on and so on. Paul had therefore briefed Titus well, and Paul is glad about that too. It sounds like Twitter. What has actually happened altogether? In fact nothing. So what is it all about?

2 Corinthians 7:15

And his inward affection is more abundant toward you, whilst he remembereth the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him.

Inward affection = motives and thereby emotions. Emotion corresponds to motive. It is about movement.

They were apparently terrified of someone sent by Paul. They had not reckoned with that. Well, they had reckoned that Paul himself would come. So he did not come, but Titus did.

2 Corinthians 7:16

I rejoice therefore that I have confidence in you in all things.

That is rather premature. That becomes clear from the following chapters.

If he nevertheless has confidence in the Corinthians, then he can immediately take the opportunity to heartily recommend the collection.

2 Corinthians 8:1

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

“Moreover” connects this chapter with the preceding one. There is a connection.

Paul has spoken about the care he and Titus have for the church in general and for the Corinthians in particular, and about the care the Corinthians are expected to have for Paul and Titus, whom they received so well. You wonder what is behind it, for you do not have a high opinion of it: the collection, of course. That collection is not for Paul himself. It is also headed: the collection for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. And we always think those people were so rich. When that church came into being, the believers sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man had need (Acts 2:45). Thus Joseph, surnamed Barnabas, sold his land and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet (Acts 4:34–37). Be that as it may, anyone with a bit of economic sense knows that it is very unwise to sell your real estate, for the only fairly imperishable possession a man can have on earth is real estate.

What those first Christians in Jerusalem did—however good the intentions and whatever the background may have been—certainly did not promote their material prosperity. The other side of the story was that within a few decades after the church came into being they had to flee from Jerusalem. That actually began after a few years, but it culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 by the Romans. In that light you might as well turn your real estate into cash anyway. Be that as it may, they became impoverished. Probably also—but we cannot quite verify it—because those who could afford it simply left Jerusalem. For others that option was apparently not feasible. So you automatically end up with the poor believers in Jerusalem.

Although Paul could of course also have told those impoverished Jews in Jerusalem that they had better move, since the Lord Jesus (and the prophets too) had announced that the city would be destroyed, instead he collects on his missionary journeys for the home front. Materially things were not going well in Jerusalem, but spiritually neither. Not only because people were leaving, but also because they were inclined there to hold fast to the Mosaic law and Jewish customs.

In our days it works no differently. We are delivered from the bondage and dominion of the law, “but,” people say, “that concerns only the ceremonial laws.” They have split the law in two for that purpose. The ceremonial laws are the laws that make no sense at all, because they serve no practical purpose, such as the feasts and the sacrificial and temple service. On the other hand you have the moral laws, such as those in the Ten Commandments. We must keep those moral laws, but we are delivered from the ceremonial law. They get into difficulties when you ask whether that ceremonial law was the bondage of the law from which we are delivered. And that we are delivered from the curse of the law. Then their answer is that we are indeed delivered from the curse of the law, but not from the law. That would mean, for example, that you may not drive through a red light, but if you do it makes no difference and you get no fine.

Very well, people therefore say that we are delivered from the ceremonial law, you do have denominations that (they say to serve the Lord) still place themselves under the ceremonial law. They keep the sabbath and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. So one thing leads to another, and soon they also celebrate the other feasts. It is hard to understand. What drives them to it? That can only be if you leave large parts of your Bible out of consideration. They are all outward things, and focusing on them is spiritual poverty.

The first church in Jerusalem kept the Mosaic law and Jewish traditions, supplemented by the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. But if Jesus is the Messiah, then we live under the New Covenant, while the law by definition is the Old Covenant. Those two cannot be reconciled. At most you can say that if we live under the New Covenant, we are free and may therefore also, for example, celebrate the sabbath. You do have the liberty, but you are then using it in the wrong way. We should use that liberty to serve the Lord under the New Covenant. By celebrating all those Old Testament ordinances you give the strong impression of wanting to serve the Lord under the Old Covenant. And that is what you do.

Large groups of Christians say that they are not delivered from the law. They admittedly cannot keep the law, but receive grace for that. You must therefore do your utmost to pay your bills, but if that does not succeed, the Lord pays the rest. But what then about the exceeding riches of His grace, which He hath made to abound toward us? He has already paid the debt. Trying to pay it yourself afterwards is blasphemous and a denial of the cross. You are trying to do something God has already done. The whole of Calvinism rests on the doctrine of gratitude. Out of gratitude you must keep the law, because the Lord has delivered us from the law. Incomprehensible. You are looking for ways to make compromises, but you should not make them. You get into a knot and never get out again.

So things went badly with the church in Jerusalem. You may wonder whether the Lord does not bless that, to which you can reply that the Lord did not do so because they continued to hold to the law. But then why did Paul collect everywhere he went for the church in Jerusalem? There is no straightforward answer to that. Probably there is something else behind it. The Gospel did indeed go out from Jerusalem into the world, but it did not remain so, almost from the beginning. Christianity found its home among the Gentiles, and the situation has been the other way round ever since. The Jews have become subordinate to Christianity and even dependent upon it. That applies in particular to those among the Christians who hold to the law. They have become needy and are no longer the source or the ideal witnesses; they are not the ideal priestly and royal people of God, to whom the oracles of God were committed. That no longer lies with Jerusalem and certainly not with those who keep the law, but somewhere else in the world. Where a curse came upon Judaism until today, the vineyard (the blessings, salvation, the Kingdom of God) was given to another people. From that other people salvation, even materially, out of the grace of God, is brought to the remnants of Judaism.

The idea of living under the Mosaic law only brings misery. The Preacher said: Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? (Ecclesiastes 7:16). Even in the Old Testament the operation of the law is heavily relativised.

2 Corinthians 8:2

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

The abundance of their joy together with their deep poverty was nevertheless abundant unto the riches of their liberality. They collected money out of their poverty, but arising from their joy.

2 Corinthians 8:3 -4

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

That is to say, for those in Jerusalem. It does not say so immediately here, but it becomes clear from the further exposition. Paul presents it here as though the initiative for this collection for the believers in Jerusalem was not his idea, but that of the believers from Macedonia. Paul is the one who coordinates things and announces that he hopes to deliver the proceeds of the collection in Jerusalem himself, for he was indeed to travel to Jerusalem for that purpose.

In Romans 15 we also find such a collection mentioned.

Romans 15:26

For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Achaia lies south of Corinth. Corinth lies on the narrow isthmus between Achaia in the south and Macedonia in the north.

A certain contribution = a certain fellowship or common contribution.

Paul would therefore first bring the proceeds of the collection to Jerusalem, from where he hoped to go on to Spain. He would travel to Spain via Rome. We also think that is how it happened, but probably on that occasion he was taken prisoner in Jerusalem and so conveyed to Rome. He appealed to Caesar and therefore the authorities had to ensure he reached Rome.

The collection for the believers in Jerusalem is also mentioned in Acts 11:29–30. It is only to indicate that this matter was apparently important enough to be mentioned in several places.

Nevertheless, the spiritual things that came from Jerusalem were apparently no longer there. Moreover, those who had received those spiritual things would provide for the believers in Jerusalem in material things. And so indeed it happened.

2 Corinthians 8:3 - 5

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

They gave themselves, but in practice that meant their possessions.

2 Corinthians 8:6

Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also.

Paul had therefore sent Titus to Corinth to collect the proceeds of the offering.

2 Corinthians 8:7

Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.

The collection was therefore still ongoing. It did not stop at a single collection. It was a recurring event. Paul encourages them in this.

2 Corinthians 8:8

I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.

It is a test of their faithfulness and dedication to the Lord. On another occasion Paul writes, after receiving a contribution, that although he was not in want, he was nevertheless very glad of it, because he saw it as the fruit of their faith. He regarded it as a positive testimony, even though it came in the form of money.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

This actually refers back to 2 Corinthians 5:21: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He was in the form and likeness of God, but emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. God has highly exalted Him (Philippians 2:6–9). The Lord gave Himself.

These words can also be applied to a later stage, namely to the days in which we now live. To the Lord has been given all power in heaven and on earth, but He is not now making use of that power. He has given Himself for the Church. He is not making full use of His riches, of His blessings, and of His position. He does so for the sake of the Church. The expression “He gave Himself for...” also means: He has limited Himself to....

It is also the expression for “taken captive.” He was delivered for our offences. He was taken captive and restricted. Being taken captive is in any case limitation, but it is more than merely being thrown into prison. The Lord is in that sense poor to this day; He limits Himself to the work with the Church. Only when that is complete will He reveal His glory. He is now longsuffering toward us.

It seems very much as though this latter application is in view here. It is therefore not only about His incarnation and death, but more specifically about His situation in this present time. Tradition tends to explain away everything in the Bible about the present work of Christ into the past. We do not wish to make that mistake. Hence the motivation to say that these words can be applied to the present work of Christ. That is probably the primary application. If He has given Himself for the Church, that was not at His

incarnation and certainly not at the cross of Golgotha. It was only afterwards. He died for all at the cross, but He has given Himself only for the Church. Christ is our Example, and we should be followers of Christ. We too should therefore give ourselves for the Church. Our practical service to Him proves to be service to the Church. That applies especially in a material sense. It is not necessarily money, but everything in practical life.

2 Corinthians 8:10

And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago.

“Advice” in the KJV always carries the meaning of “intention.” Paul is here going to tell them what his intention is. That weekly collection, as described in Romans 15, has already been going on for a year...

2 Corinthians 8:11

Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have.

That is therefore his intention. That they not only made those plans and promises, but that they must now also carry them out. You may promise all sorts of things, and Paul rejoices over that too, but in the long run it is of no use if the intention is not fulfilled. It is not only about the willingness, but also about the result.

2 Corinthians 8:12

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.

“Hath” in the sense of what he has done and therefore “has done.”

2 Corinthians 8:13

For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened:

The believers in Jerusalem would be relieved of their burdens, but by selling everything they have now come into affliction themselves. It is not the intention that the same should happen to the Corinthians, so that others would later have to collect for them.

2 Corinthians 8:14

But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality:

It is not merely a swapping, so that the believers in Jerusalem would now become rich and they poor, but that it should become more equal. It is about care for one another. At any rate Paul has that care and also feels responsible for it. Thereby we touch on one of the present problems of believers at least. We have been influenced by prevailing ideas in the world, so that we recognise no authority any longer not only in the world but also among believers. First God was abolished, and then the authority of the Bible. The logical consequence of that, certainly according to Romans 1, is that we have also abolished human authority. And now in the Church too. That makes it very difficult to get anything arranged, in any area.

Nevertheless, Paul and his companions do present themselves as responsible, so much so that Paul instructs someone else—Titus in this case—to arrange matters. That is how you learn how it works. You may think that authority and power should not exist, but God has arranged it that way. He appoints overseers, and they do bear responsibility.

Be that as it may, the intention of the collection is equality, namely that we should also bear responsibility for one another in material things.

2 Corinthians 8:15

As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

Taken from the gathering of the manna in the wilderness. We always understood that this was a miracle of God: that he who gathered much had nothing over, and he who gathered little had no lack. That will also have been the case, and therefore it applies here too. Although your accountant will not agree, a person does not become poor by giving. That applies at any rate to us as believers. God loveth a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). That is how it works. The Lord provides for us. Of course you can say that the Lord also provides for the poor. That is true too, but for everything He does He certainly uses personnel, and preferably us. 2 Corinthians 8:16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. Just as Paul is earnest for the church in Corinth, so is Titus.

2 Corinthians 8:17 -24

For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you.

18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches;

19 And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind:

20 Avoiding this, that no man should blame us in this abundance which is administered by us:

21 Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.

22 And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.

23 Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the messengers of the churches, and the glory of Christ.

24 Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the proof of your love, and of our boasting on your behalf.

If you then wish to be so kind to me, act accordingly and accept this arrangement.

In the next chapter Paul continues cheerfully about the collection for the believers in Jerusalem.

The intention is that we should serve the Lord. The question is then usually how I could do that. Well, the simplest way is through the collection. That is where it begins. If you

are not willing to part with a penny for it, how will the Lord be able to use you in other things? Money is after all only money. We certainly cannot do without it, but it is nevertheless the easiest means of serving the Lord. It costs you nothing further of yourself, of your effort, of your time, or of your ordinary further life. Moreover, we English are supposed to be free. Apparently tax collection is not counted in that. If you count that, then we are a nation of slaves. That we are supposed to be free stands apart from any financial or material contribution. It leaves us further free. It may be difficult to part with your money, but for all sorts of reasons giving money is nevertheless the easiest way to serve the Lord and thereby the Church.

Only in the epistles to the Corinthians does Paul discuss this subject so extensively. In Romans 16 he makes a mention of it, but no more. Here in Corinth, however, so much emphasis is laid upon it, because that is where it begins. You would begin by having something over for the Lord. Whether you are usable for any activity lies a good deal further on. It begins with whether you are willing to entrust your earthly possessions wholly or partly to the Lord.

2 Corinthians 9:1

For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you:

It is still about the same thing, namely the collection. It concerns a collection intended for the believers in Jerusalem, to provide for the poverty into which that church has fallen. In the first chapters of Acts we read how the believers of that church in Jerusalem sold their possessions and brought their money to the apostles, and thus in fact to the Lord. Ultimately the whole of Jerusalem would be destroyed. In any case no church would remain there. That is also roughly the underlying thought of the apostle Paul in this collection, for however it may be, though the church may historically have found its origin in Jerusalem, that does not alter the fact that after the passage of a few years and well within one generation that whole church in Jerusalem would have disappeared. Thus salvation would go from the Jews to the Gentiles.

We encounter that history in Acts as well. That book begins with the situation in Jerusalem, even with the express call to remain in Jerusalem and wait for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, with the result the preaching of the New Covenant. The same book, which begins so expressly with Jerusalem, ends with Rome, where the apostle Paul has then arrived. We have heard nothing more of Peter for a very long time. The first chapters deal with the history of Peter, and then it continues with the history of Paul. That is precisely what it is about, for however it may be, Jerusalem fades into the background and salvation goes to the Gentiles. That is confirmed to us in Acts 28:28, namely that salvation is indeed sent to the Gentiles. That is the situation behind several of these epistles: the Gospel would indeed be preached from Jerusalem to the nations and thus to the Gentiles, but in practice the Gospel would disappear from Jerusalem itself, if only because Jerusalem itself would disappear. That history already sets in in the history of Acts, for there we find that the believers in Jerusalem are persecuted and an important part of those believers already disappears from Jerusalem, with the result that the Gospel was also preached outside Jerusalem and Judaea. But the ultimate result is that through the unbelief and hostility of the Jews in general and of Jerusalem in particular, Jerusalem would be destroyed, with the consequence that an end was made of the Jewish state, but also of this Jewish church.

It also proved that this church in general was not willing to listen to what Paul preached. In Acts 15 there were already difficulties about that. Paul says on occasion that this collection for the church in Jerusalem has among other purposes that he might gain entrance there. That is to say, that they would not only accept the money collected through his efforts, but that on that occasion they would at least have the courtesy to listen to his preaching for once.

It also proves that this collection plays an important role in New Testament history, even though it appears to have taken place on several occasions. That is not entirely clear. Under verse 1 you find references to various other places where this collection is mentioned. That is why Paul also writes that it is unnecessary to write to them about this collection, because it was apparently already known to them. Nevertheless he writes two chapters about it.

Acts 11:29

Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea:

30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

Money was therefore brought to Jerusalem by Barnabas and Saul and made available to the elders there in the church, again partly with the purpose that they might be willing to listen to Paul, which always remained problematic.

In the epistles we find this collection mentioned on several occasions. At any rate in Romans 15, where Paul sets out at length and with great emphasis that although he wished to come to Rome (he had after all never been there), he first wished to travel to Jerusalem beforehand.

Romans 15:24

Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem.

Common = general = communal. Later that word in English acquired the meaning of "ordinary," for what is communal is ordinary. Then it acquired a negative meaning, for something ordinary is what is ordinary among the people. Then it becomes low. Originally it therefore had the meaning of communal. Legally it still has that meaning. All those churches in Macedonia and Achaia therefore thought it good to make a common contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

Romans 15:27

It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

Galatians 6:6.

They have received spiritual blessings from Jerusalem. If the believers in Jerusalem lack material things, then provision is made for that by the Gentiles who have received a share in the spiritual blessings from Jerusalem.

Romans 15:28

When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain.

That seems also to have happened, but of course only after his release from Rome.

When he went to Rome he was after all a prisoner. He then spent two years imprisoned in Rome and afterwards will probably have travelled to Spain.

This collection is here connected with Rome. The thought is that salvation goes to the Gentiles and therefore at any rate to the capital of the Gentiles. Before Paul goes to Rome, he once again confirms that things are ill in Jerusalem.

1 Corinthians 16:1

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.

2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

They would lay up a store. In the second epistle to the Corinthians it is still about that. He would send Titus and yet another who is not named (2 Corinthians 8 from verse 16). The idea is that money was regularly collected and that this would be collected on one occasion and brought to Jerusalem. Hence it is indeed a biblical idea to collect on the first day of the week, to lay up a kind of store for a good purpose.

Here we find exactly the opposite of what is usual with us, namely that here on the mission field money is collected for the home front. Normally it is the other way round. Paul had therefore already written about it, but he gives further comment on it here. That is a general comment, in which he assumes that the proceeds of such a collection should be the normal result of the blessings they have received. On another occasion he says that it is not about the proceeds of the collection to him, but that he can see from that proceeds how the believers stand toward the Lord and toward the work of the Lord. That may not be the best measure, but it is the simplest. You can simply count it and express it in a figure. Ultimately of course it is not about material results. The preaching is certainly not directed to that and should not be directed to it, but to spiritual results. But those things go hand in hand. Those spiritual results are a difficult matter with the Corinthians, and whether there are also material results is very much open to question. That will undoubtedly be the reason why Paul goes into it so extensively with the Corinthians.

He therefore says...

2 Corinthians 9:2

For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many.

The question is whether they really have such a ready mind. If that were truly so, then it would also have been truly unnecessary to write about it. Be that as it may, Paul approaches them along this tactical way.

Achaia (with Corinth as capital) had already been busy for a year collecting every first day of the week for the needy believers in Jerusalem.

And your zeal hath provoked very many = this matter began in Corinth and thus in Achaia, but it has worked infectiously toward other churches, especially toward churches in Macedonia, which lie relatively close by.

2 Corinthians 9:3

Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready:

4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness.

These brothers = Titus and the other brother not named.

Paul has boasted to other churches about these Corinthians, who did this, and now it must become clear whether that was indeed justified; whether that boasting is not made vain. Of course it is nice that they began with collecting and that this worked infectiously on others, but the question is how much that collection ultimately yielded. The question is whether that boasting was justified. Now he sends people to collect the offering. Paul says that he will now see how spiritually they stand, for that will become evident from what is in the collection bag.

2 Corinthians 9:4

And that not possible, so the Macedonians came with me, and found you unprepared, we, (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting.

Paul sends these brothers and hopes that his boasting is not made vain. He deliberately does not come with any Macedonians, because he had spoken so highly of the Corinthians to them. If the Macedonians came along, they would see exactly what the collection had yielded among the Corinthians. Paul did not dare risk that, for if the yield proved disappointing, he would be nicely put to shame. He therefore had no high expectations of it and so lets it be collected by Titus and that other brother. If he let the Macedonians come along, then the Corinthians themselves could also be put to shame (that we say not, ye).

Paul knows how financially capable the Corinthians are, but he also knows their character. It stands to reason that people focused on earthly things are not easily persuaded to make a substantial contribution. The Corinthians were carnal people, so they “sat on their money,” as the saying goes.

Paul evidently had little confidence in it. When in a meeting you get an extensive announcement for a collection, you know the speaker has little confidence in it. Of course it could also be that there are great difficulties and that it is only happening on this occasion.

Although Paul says he has every confidence that it will go well, in fact he has no confidence in it at all. He hopes, however, that it will prove otherwise.

2 Corinthians 9:5

I thought it necessary therefore to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. It had all been announced beforehand. They had had a long time to save, so that when the time came, the yield would be decent; that the yield would be a blessing and not look like stinginess, like miserliness. Paul summarises it once more...

2 Corinthians 9:6

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

The wording is rather obscure, but the thought Paul puts forward is that the Lord loves a cheerful giver, which means that the Lord Himself also provides. That he who contributes to the work of the Lord (not only financially) will also be blessed for it. In what way the Lord does that we naturally have no control over. The idea is that someone who contributes generously to the collection will certainly not become impoverished through it. The Lord sees to that.

He who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. If you contribute financially to the work of the Lord, you will also receive blessings for it. Whether that is also in a financial sense is very much open to question, but it can be.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

Every believer is by definition free and stands under no form of compulsion. That therefore also applies to this matter. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind (Romans 14:5). That verse is admittedly not about the collection but about other matters, but the principle remains the same. Everyone is personally responsible for his own affairs.

Let every one give according as he purposeth in his heart. Not grudgingly, or of necessity, because he feels obliged, or because pressure is exerted on him, or because everyone thinks it must be done, but simply from his heart. Spontaneously, is the thought. And even cheerfully, for God loveth a cheerful giver. It is admittedly true that it is more blessed to give than to receive, but here it is expressly stated that God loves a cheerful giver. That you therefore contribute to the work of the Lord with gladness, also in this respect.

2 Corinthians 9:8

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Sufficiency = contentment. Then you have enough and are therefore content.

With sufficiency you find that you have enough. That has nothing to do with what you actually have, but with what you think of it, how you experience it. Not always having enough, but having sufficiency. In practice we use the word “contentment” for that. God is able to make all grace abound toward us, and where grace abounds, there we are content. Then we find that we have enough. God is abundant in grace; the intention is that we should abound to every good work and be content with our private circumstances.

There is also a real causal connection between them. If we are discontent with what we ourselves have, we will have to work to change that. But if we are content with what we have, with our own circumstances, then we can subsequently devote ourselves to this every good work.

Good works are works that spring from faith and therefore from the heart. Moreover, those works serve to the honour of God. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). A few verses earlier it says what that consists of approximately: We are saved by grace without works, that God might shew the exceeding riches of his grace through us and in us. In short, that God might come to His honour in us and through us. Good works are therefore works that spring from faith and serve to the honour of God, after which James said: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works (James 2:18). Those are therefore the same good works. We should always be ready unto every good work. That is not only contributing to the collection, though that belongs to it, but that is approximately the lowest there is.

2 Corinthians 9:9

(As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

Quoted from Psalm 112:9.

He hath dispersed = he hath given; he hath distributed.

In the Old Testament scattering is the same as sowing.

He hath given to the poor = he hath given to the poor.

His righteousness remaineth for ever. He gives to the poor anyway. If we are poor according to His standards, then He gives to us.

Paul therefore says that nothing can go wrong. You can contribute with confidence. If you become impoverished through it, then a collection will be held for the Corinthians again. The Lord sees to that. 2 Corinthians 10:10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;

God grants seed to the sower, so that the sower may sow. Seed is the Word, and the sower is he who preaches the Gospel. The same God who grants seed to the sower also gives bread for food. Apart from the Bible, if the farmer gives seed to the sower to sow, he naturally also gives the man bread to eat. God provides for everything. He gives His Word, so that we may spread it, and He also ensures that our life is maintained for that purpose. In other words, if you serve the Lord, then the Lord will also provide and supply your livelihood. For you are after all His servant.

So it happens here for the benefit of the believers in Jerusalem, but the principle applies equally to the Corinthians. Paul is therefore in effect saying to the Corinthians that if you serve the Lord and perhaps put more in the collection bag than you can really afford, then the Lord will make it good again. All that they do in the service of the Lord will be blessed by the Lord Himself.

2 Corinthians 9:11

Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

Rich in bountifulness. The Bible hardly ever speaks of being rich in possessions, and when it does, it is not always positive. You should be spiritually rich and rich in bountifulness. If the Corinthians are rich in this bountifulness, in this collection, then Paul and his companions will thank God for it. If God is thanked for it, then it is to the honour of God.

2 Corinthians 9:12

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

Here therefore the same thing is said once more. Not only Paul and his companions will thank the Lord for it, but undoubtedly the believers in Jerusalem too. It is therefore in any case to the honour of God.

Thus Paul manages to speak about earthly matters on the level of the Corinthians and yet point out that it has a spiritual effect.

For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God...

2 Corinthians 9:13

Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

The saints who are in want will glorify God through this contribution. They will glorify God for the subjection of the Corinthians, who have indeed subjected themselves to the Word of God and therefore serve the Lord.

Subjection unto means in practice service unto or in the service of. And they will glorify God or thank Him for their liberal distribution. The bountifulness here consists in that distribution. They share their possessions with the believers from Jerusalem. They will glorify God through their prayer for the Corinthians...

2 Corinthians 9:14

And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

The believers from Jerusalem would like to meet those Corinthians. Through that collection a bond arises. That at any rate contributes to the practical unity of the believers. For we should endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit. That happens here through a material contribution, but nevertheless a spiritual bond arises from it. Thus these purely material matters still have a spiritual effect.

They long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you.

It is all grace, even if you can serve the Lord with money. The whole service to the Lord is by the way regarded as grace. Paul's ability to be a minister of the new testament is of God. Unto him was this grace given, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3). It is grace anyway that we can serve the Lord, for if we had not received grace, we would have remained unprofitable together. We have received grace, so that we should serve the Lord, but also one another. In practice there is hardly any difference: by serving one another, we serve the Lord. In practice the commandment is to serve the Lord your God and your neighbour as

yourself. Theoretically of course not, but in practice yes. 2 Corinthians 10:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

Though men may thank the Lord for the gifts that come from the Corinthians, Paul concludes his argument by thanking for the unspeakable gift that comes from God. That gift of the grace of God is eternal life (Romans 6:23). John says: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life (1 John 5:11). He adds that this life is in His Son. That unspeakable gift is admittedly eternal life, but higher still, it is Christ. God gave His Son. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. It does not say “have the Son,” for it says “have everlasting life.” But he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12). God has given us eternal life, and in the light of that it is not so difficult also to give something materially to the Lord and to contribute something for the work of the Lord in general, or for the work of the perfecting of the saints, as it is called in Ephesians 4:12.

- Paul defends his apostolic authority

2 Corinthians 10:1

Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you:

Moreover = we now go on, after the extensive announcement of the collection.

I Paul myself = three times Paul. It is therefore clear who is speaking here: I Paul myself.

Now come the difficultly constructed sentences, such as you actually only encounter in the Corinthian epistles.

2 Corinthians 10:2

But I beseech you, that I may not be bold when I am present with that confidence, wherewith I think to be bold against some, which think of us as if we walked according to the flesh.

The idea remains that Paul intended to visit the Corinthians, but so far nothing had come of it, probably also because he really dreaded it, for what he would then have to do: be bold, namely; speak freely to those Corinthians, knowing that they were not waiting for that.

Apparently they thought that Paul had gone rather boldly against some Corinthians. We do not officially know what it was about. Be that as it may, they have something against Paul and against the authority he exercises in their eyes. Whether he actually exercised authority himself is still open to question, for in the first place Paul speaks with authority. That is easy, because ultimately they are not his own words. When a herald is sent to make a certain announcement on behalf of the king, such a man speaks with authority. It was, however, certainly not his own authority, but the authority of the words he spoke.

The prophets of the Old Testament also spoke with authority. People asked the prophets to prophesy something good, something favourable, something desirable. They did not do so, with the result that they were imprisoned or killed. In those days people reasoned that the prophet was a kind of sorcerer who only needed to speak for it to come true.

That was not the case with those prophets. They only had to declare what God had to declare.

Think of Balaam. He wanted to carry out the commission for which he was paid, but he could not manage it, so that on that occasion he was a true prophet and God spoke through him. Balaam is the clearest example. After that there were plenty of prophets who, unfortunately for the people, brought an unfavourable message. They brought a message, but they spoke with authority. Not their own authority, but the authority of the Word of God. When those words have practical consequences, authority is also exercised in practice.

The same applied to Paul, whether he liked it or not. At any rate he says that he hopes he will not have to do so in their presence and that it will not have to be as it apparently was in the past according to some. That he will not have to be so bold and outspoken toward them and will not have to act so decisively. Moreover, people accused Paul that when he exercised that boldness, he walked according to the flesh. But it was exactly the opposite. Paul became angry, and then they said he was carnal. They did not consider that spiritual. Paul was a spiritual leader and was active, leading the way. That, however, was not appreciated. The Corinthians preferred to remain where they were, right in the midst of the world, with their own fleshly rights, where each stood up for his own rights and dragged one another before the courts. Paul became angry about that, and that was suddenly called walking according to the flesh.

In that case the Lord Jesus also walked according to the flesh. A hymn says: "I wish to be like Jesus, so humble and so good. His words were lovely, His voice was always sweet." If you read the Gospels, you certainly do not get that impression. He often railed against the Jews and called them a generation of vipers. Even when He was a guest at Mary and Martha's, He did not take Martha's side, though she was trying so hard and was so busy working. Or: "Simon [the Pharisee], I have somewhat to say unto thee..." followed by a parable that was certainly not flattering to Simon (Luke 7:36–50). The whole party was then ruined. What do you mean, His voice was always sweet? Indeed, for those who believed in Him, but in public it was not all so sweet.

On the contrary. The Lord became indignant.

John the Baptist likewise; he railed at his audience. Was that according to the flesh? No, that was precisely according to the spirit, because he was indignant at the unbelief and ungodliness of a notably religious people. You find the same thing here with the Corinthians. Paul therefore says that he does not walk according to the flesh and that he does not wage war according to the flesh. He walks in the flesh, but does not wage war according to the flesh. That is the next verse.

2 Corinthians 10:3

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

He walks in the flesh. So outwardly there is something to be seen and judged. The spirit, however, is never the outside, but always the inside. We do indeed walk in the flesh, but we do not wage war according to the flesh, in a carnal manner. With that he has immediately said that it is not only about teaching or upbringing of believers. You can call it that and in a certain sense it is, but Paul uses another term here, namely that it is war. Why did he think it necessary to rebuke Peter publicly? Because it was war. The devil is out to bring believers back under the law in general and preferably under the Jewish law. For that purpose he then calls it the Jewish roots of the Gospel. But when you think of Jewish roots, you more readily think of the Jewish roots of unbelief. If any people could have known and should have known, it was the Jewish people. If you want

to preach the Gospel to unbelievers, then you can best do it first to the Jews, precisely because they are such an unbelieving people. The Jewish roots are those of unbelief and persecution of Christians. Read your Bible. But well, people are generally no longer interested in that. Especially not in Christianity itself. Why would those who are not at all interested in Christianity be interested in the Bible? There lies the problem; people do not want to know the biblical truth. That biblical truth is indeed that it is war.

As soon as we hear the Gospel and place our trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God places us outside the camp and we stand in a hostile position toward the world. Actually it is the other way round: the world sees us as enemies, as a threat. If you do not go along with the crowd, fine, the crowd laughs, but if you become a larger group, you automatically become threatening.

If a few Muslims come to the Netherlands, is that threatening? Well, in the 1950s it was still manageable. In 1955 the first mosque in the Netherlands was opened in The Hague. It was not yet recognisable as a mosque, but that changed in the 1960s when two minarets were placed on the building. Though recognisable, it did not yet look really threatening. Now that their numbers are increasing, it does become threatening. People then say that this is xenophobia, fear of the foreign. That is how it has been explained away, but in reality it is of course threatening to society. Because we do not want to admit that it is war, however, we have invented the term “multicultural society.” That is a contradiction in terms. A society is a culture. A multicultural society does not exist and is simply threatening. Look at the Balkans, with all those different population groups and tribes, or Libya with all its different tribes, or South Africa. They are threatening to one another. No single society ever emerges from them. Those areas are always hotbeds of misery and conflict. Until not so long ago you had exactly the same in Northern Ireland. In Belfast the fences between the streets rose above the houses to separate various population groups from one another. It is about different peoples, even in terms of origin (in Northern Ireland perhaps not), but of course you are no longer allowed to say that nowadays. Naturally it is threatening to your way of life and so on. The world has a plan, follows a certain current, and is controlled by the devil and goes in one and the same direction. We as believers simply step aside and do not join in. Then it is war, for we who believe and receive and practise the truth are threatening to a world that holds the truth down in unrighteousness.

In the world opinions prevail. It is not, however, about what we think, but about how it is. It is about whether you believe what God has revealed in His Word. After that it is not what we think of it, but that we know it. The Word of God is not doubtful. That is threatening to the world and therefore it is war.

Experiential religion is a Christian term, but it must give way to the Word of God. People have turned Christianity into something of experience and feelings, but that puts you at war with the Word of God. It is about truth versus falsehood. That is war, and Paul is in that position. The Corinthians themselves decided how the church should look and be built, but Paul says it can only be done in one way. The church can only be built on the foundation, and it is not built with wood, hay, and stubble. They did it nonetheless, and that is Paul’s frustration, who in one way or another still feels responsible for the Corinthians, because that church there arose through his preaching. In that we see his impotence, for the Corinthians do not want to. When people do not want to, it stops. Paul had therefore acted boldly. At least, that was how it was explained. He was accused that by behaving so, he walked according to the flesh, while it was precisely

the Corinthians who walked according to the flesh. According to Paul, however, it is rather more nuanced. We walk in the flesh, but do not wage war according to the flesh...

2 Corinthians 10:4

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)The opposite of carnal is mighty. The opposite of mighty is weak. So the opposite of weak is carnal. At least here. With those carnal weapons you achieve nothing. Paul's weapons are not carnal, but mighty through God and are for the pulling down of strong holds. Those strong holds are not literal strongholds or fortresses, but reasonings, human opinions.

What in verse 4 is still called the pulling down of strong holds is called in verse 5 the pulling down of reasonings. What people have contrived and constructed as doctrine. If you really seek the truth, you soon discover that humanity has cobbled together all sorts of teachings. Sometimes to the point of the comical, but they are taken seriously. Those teachings are fenced off and walled up. When you then come with the truth, it does not fit there. The truth is deadly to all falsehood and human reasonings.

2 Corinthians 10:5

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; It is all about the pride of human reasonings and thus about the pride of the human heart, which makes itself independent of the truth and reasons the truth away, reasons it out. In philosophy truth has been declared a relative concept and equated with experience. They have devised that every human being has his own truth. That is therefore not true. Every human being has his own experience. That, however, has nothing to do with truth. Having an opinion about something is proud. When you read a Bible text you may think that this or that is what it says, but that is still only a question. For there are more texts in the Bible than that one. The Bible consists of about 1,200 pages. It is therefore the intention that you compare Scripture with Scripture. Then you can be sure that certainty, truth, emerges from it. You must deal seriously with that and not draw conclusions too soon. That does not mean you should not draw conclusions, for of course you must.

Paul says that we cast down reasonings and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. That can be knowledge about God, but also knowledge that comes from God. The same can be said of the expression "knowledge of him" in Ephesians 1:17. We have received the spirit of truth and of revelation in the knowledge of him (it should be: in knowledge of Him). That can therefore be knowledge about Him, but also knowledge that comes from Him.

Knowledge of God comes to us through the Bible. Whoever resists that therefore resists the Bible. It is almost comical to see that when it comes to history and everything connected with it, almost all ancient sources and writings are taken seriously, but as soon as something is in the Bible—which is generally much older than any other human source—it is not taken seriously at all. The Bible is seen as a religious book, by which is meant that the Bible is an unreliable book. It is suggested that it is precisely the Bible that is about experience, conviction, and feeling, for all such things are placed under the category of religion. Therefore you do not need to take the Bible seriously for the truth, and that is indeed no longer done. That can hardly be otherwise, for if people did

take the Bible seriously and acknowledged it as truth, then suddenly the worldly opinions prove to be matters of experience and opinion: how someone has arranged certain facts in such a way that he arrives at certain theories and models. Then they would have to throw everything overboard. The Bible is therefore indeed deadly to human science. That was already in 1 Corinthians 1. Here we are in 2 Corinthians 10 and essentially it is still about exactly the same thing.

Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; The power of God does that.

Every thought: that is the stronghold of man. In his theories and reasonings the pride of man is expressed.

Bringing into captivity every thought = restricting, or excluding, just as prisoners are removed from society. They are placed outside society by being shut up in what we call a prison. Hence in the Bible captivity and exile are the same.

Every thought is brought into captivity. They are in fact excluded, taken away, made nothing. The purpose of that is the obedience of Christ. Every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. People should learn to listen to Christ Himself.

Be that as it may, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was obedient to the Scriptures. He let Himself be led by the Scriptures, which He had studied with great emphasis. Much is not described in the Bible about the life of Christ, but it is said that He let Himself be led by the Word of God. And conversely, He is thereafter also the One who authorises the Word of God. That is to say, if we are then to be followers of Christ, what do we follow? What did He do that we should follow Him in? Charismatic Christians would say that He did miracles and signs before the eyes of the people. Our answer, however, is that He let Himself be led by the Word of God. He submitted to the Scriptures and obeyed them. He said: "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." For as far as He did things, He said exactly the same about them. They were the works of His Father. In that we should be followers of Christ.

Especially in Christian circles the reliability of the Old Testament is questioned. That is very popular and self-evident, but the Lord Jesus did not question it. The consequence of the reasoning that what is described in the Old Testament cannot be correct is that people then also push the Lord Jesus aside. In the days of the "Jesus people" and the "Jesus movement" there was one last revival, but since then we have lost the name Jesus and you hear even sincere believers speaking only of God this and God that. Moreover, if you want to live under the law, then Christ is become of no effect unto you (Galatians 5:2); then you have nothing of Christ. Even if you still know and use the name, it is still questionable whether you truly know Him and live in fellowship with Him. Yes, these are serious words, but very fundamental.

You would do wisely to begin by setting aside all human tradition. You do not need to throw it away immediately, for you can still look at it from time to time. Then you look at what the Bible says about it. Then it all suddenly looks very different. After that you can also establish that people in the world do indeed know one thing and another, but that they have placed things in the wrong context or drawn the wrong conclusions, simply because they do not want to listen to the Word of God. That is what Paul is talking about. It is about the truth as God has revealed it and therefore the truth concerning God Himself; who He is and what He does in His plan of the ages. After that you can

always learn what place we as children of God have received in it, but that is of course not where the story begins. It does not begin with us, but with Him.

We should listen to Him.

We have weapons, and they are spiritual weapons. Which they are is not really mentioned here. From this passage you can at any rate conclude that those spiritual weapons have something to do with thoughts and reasonings, though not of men, but of God. Then you read some other Scripture passages from which it appears that those weapons consist, for example, of a sword, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17). We know the Word of God as the twoedged sword (Hebrews 4:12). Ephesians 6 is about the spiritual armour. The sword is mentioned there last, which does not mean it is the least weapon. The Word of God is a spiritual sword. That spiritual sword is indeed deadly to the flesh. The Word of God divides asunder, makes a distinction between spirit and soul. There in the sense of new man versus old man and thus also the difference between the New and Old Covenant. Certainly within the framework of the Epistle to the Hebrews. The thrust of it is that we do not live under the law but under grace, not under the Old Testament ordinances under Aaron, but under the ordinances of the New Testament priesthood, of Christ, the high priest after the order of Melchisedec. The Word teaches us that, so that you are obliged to distinguish dispensations, but that is another story.

2 Corinthians 10:6

And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

It seems the translators have somewhat lost the thread here. That happens quite often. Apparently they cannot quite follow Paul's line of thought and therefore cannot translate well either. You need not be shocked by that, for that is simply how it works. Many think in all naivety that if you translate such a text literally, you can then follow the train of thought. That is not how it works. The translator must first follow the train of thought in the original text in order to translate. If he cannot do that, translation also becomes problematic. Yet the KJV translators were good translators, because they then translated literally, so that we can now still notice that they sometimes could not follow the train of thought. That literal translation is many times better than later translations, because later translators could also not follow the train of thought and then simply made their own thoughts of it and expressed them in English. We are still stuck with that. So if you cannot follow the train of thought, it is better to translate literally rather than put your own thoughts into it.

"And having in a readiness" could also have been translated as "and being ready." In practice it makes no real difference here.

"And having in a readiness" would mean that they have the weapons from the previous verse ready. If that is so, you can also translate it as "being ready," for why are they ready? Because they have those weapons.

And having in a readiness to revenge... Revenge = to fight, for that is what it says in the preceding verses. The word "revenge" at the same time implies that the aggression came from the opponent. That would then have to be avenged. Revenge is by definition a reaction to something. It is not merely conflict in the sense that we are aggressive. For when we preach the Gospel we are not aggressive, but precisely the unbelievers. The Gospel has been preached throughout the whole world, but it has been rejected. People

fight to set that Word of God aside. We are more or less defensive in that. Where victory is achieved in that conflict, there is talk of revenge, reaction to the aggression of an unbelieving world.

Hence the word “revenge.” The reckoning will come anyway, but ultimately only on the last day.

We have or are ready to revenge all disobedience... What was first called strong holds and high things and thoughts is now simply called disobedience. You can therefore have it against the great thinkers of the world, namely that their thoughts are thoughts of disobedience and rebellion against God.

When your obedience is fulfilled = while...While that conflict against disobedience continues, obedience is effected, or won. You can therefore also translate the sentence as: while your obedience is being fulfilled, or will be fulfilled. Being and becoming are the same. In your own words: while someone comes to faith, his unbelief is defeated, cast down, excluded, imprisoned. When someone comes to faith, he gives up his own ideas, especially also his own experience, his religion. He submits to the Word of God. Read Acts 2, the first Gospel preaching, notably directed to the Jews, to religious people, with Jewish roots. When they came to faith they were cut off from those Jewish roots. Yes, according to the flesh they had Jewish roots, but we are not talking about the flesh, but about spirit, about regeneration. That is completely different. They had to distance themselves from that. After that you find in the course of Acts, but also in the epistles, that they let back in what had been imprisoned. Well known is the Calvinistic teaching, which admits that we are delivered from the law, but because we are now delivered from it, we must try to fulfil the law out of gratitude. You can really read that nowhere in the Bible. They can then also devise a text to show that the Lord grants us strength for that, which of course rests on a misunderstanding, for there are no such Scripture passages. People always invent a philosophy to bring something back in again. So there are also philosophies to reintroduce Judaism among believers. It is easy enough to show that the sabbath was once the day of rest, dedicated to the Lord. And so we too should keep the sabbath. That is why someone has also invented that Sunday observance is an invention of the Roman Catholic Church in the days of the Roman Empire, since Constantine the Great. With the introduction of Christianity as the state religion, the Romans introduced Sunday as the day of rest and so it is not at all biblical, they say. The first day of the week already played a role in the Old Testament, though there it is largely prophetic in character, because it refers to New Testament ordinances. Be that as it may, you easily get into all kinds of subtleties, all kinds of conflict, which in our time is usually fought out via forums on the internet. But it all comes to nothing, for it is about human philosophy that has been tried to be brought in through the back door over time, while it does not belong in this house at all, simply because the Lord has thrown it out. But because we think carnally we think it necessary. It is easy enough to hang a philosophy on the fact that man simply needs law, but God says that man does not need it. Stronger still, if he has commandments and ordinances, it goes even more wrong. What man needs is grace, not at the end of the story, but at the beginning of the story. Not grace to remove all those transgressions, but grace to live from it as a principle of life. Then it suddenly looks very different. These are biblical things, and that is what Paul is talking about. The frustrating thing is that he says: “We have in readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience shall be fulfilled or will be fulfilled.” He says: “We have in readiness,” but if you read it carefully, you read that he has it in

readiness, but does nothing with it. Not yet. That is also what it is about. The Corinthians think that Paul writes such bold letters, but Paul says that he hopes that when he is with them, he will not have to be so bold. That he will not have to use those weapons actively. Elsewhere you read: "Shall I come unto you with a rod?" but in practice he is rather powerless toward the Corinthians, because they do not want to listen. The last chapters of this epistle are about that.

Of course this was an issue not understood in the days of the KJV. In the first place because people had no or scarcely any idea of what the Church really is. As long as you have no idea whether someone is saved or becomes saved, or will be saved, you also have no idea what the Church actually is as a "thing." Where the conflict in practice was a carnal conflict, with real swords, not to mention pitchforks and flails, people hardly got round to spiritual conflict either. Unless it was that spiritual conflict which was limited to the question: "Shall I hold to my conviction, or shall I dilute it a bit?" To this day this is the problem. The Bible says of the Reformation: Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead... I have not found thy works perfect before God (Revelation 3:1–2). That Reformation stopped somewhere, probably through a carnal conflict and an earthly mind. It was never completed, after which it fell back of its own accord. In this old world it is always the case that if something does not grow, it dies. It therefore fell back and died, for today it is again just as in the days of the Reformation. You only have the authority of the church, of the Christian organisation. The authority of the Bible has long been gone. That began at any rate already there in Dordrecht. There the authority of the church organisation was established, in cooperation with the States General, the English government. It was not finished, it was stopped, and with that all life disappeared from it. That is how it went. Truly, it was all well meant, but what is good? People have always had trouble with Paul, right up to our own day. He is considered not to belong. He does not fit in the list of the apostles. If we did not have him, everything would still be reasonably understandable. Paul, however, wrote the largest part of the New Testament epistles. So if you remove the largest part of the New Testament epistles, the problem is already considerably smaller. Yet the issue is not with Paul, for someone like Peter preached exactly the same thing. He too wrote that we live under the New Covenant and not under the weak principles handed down to us from our fathers. We have not followed cleverly devised fables; we have received present truth (that expression comes from him, 2 Peter 1:12). Moreover, Peter fully agrees with all the epistles of Paul, as he says in 2 Peter 3. So you are not rid of the problem simply by removing Paul from the Bible.

People have trouble with Paul because he speaks about the position of the Church, outside the camp and officially and fundamentally in heaven, as a heavenly people and firstfruits of the Kingdom that will yet be revealed on earth in the future. That is what Paul tries to impress upon the Corinthians, but they have absolutely no interest in it—just as today the largest part of Christendom has absolutely no interest in it whatsoever. People are chiefly interested in other things, but not in the Bible. They are full of Christian activity, but the Bible is not their thing. They have nothing to do with it. There are even missionaries who think the same way.

After that Paul speaks about his own position, concerning which he says that God has indeed given him authority (right) to do certain things, to use those weapons for the building up of the Church and not for their pulling down. Although the Corinthians themselves regard Paul's teachings as criticism and think he is negative about them

because he condemns their conduct, Paul says that it may well look that way, but that is not how it is. A property developer will say that rubble must be cleared away in order to establish that new building, to construct it. You may well want to preserve all those fine buildings, but commercially that is not viable. It is far cheaper to buy such a property, demolish it, and then put up new construction. That is exactly what Paul did. If you want to hold on to the old, it costs a great deal. Moreover, the trouble continues. We as believers are expected to let go of the old in order to accept the new. That is difficult, for it goes very much against human nature. We, however, love progress and let go of the old and allow ourselves to be built into a spiritual temple. We allow ourselves to be placed in that whole which is the Church of Christ. That is not built or judged according to worldly and carnal standards, but by the power, the weapons of God. Namely through the Word of God.

2 Corinthians 10:7

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.

Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? That is rhetoric. Apparently they do look on things after the outward appearance. They looked at Paul and regarded his outward appearance and found him no impressive man. Certainly not charismatic. They did not regard him as a leader; at most as a fanatic out for authority.

If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's...If you are then so sure that you are Christ's...let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's...They think they are Christ's and in effect say they need no one else. You still regularly encounter that today: "I belong to the Lord and He takes care of me." If you have the Lord, who else do you need? Yet that overlooks what the Bible says, namely that if you are His, He gives you what you need. At any rate He has given some to be apostles. The Lord has at any rate given Paul, and in particular also to the Corinthians. If you have been able to devise that you are Christ's, then you can also devise that we too are Christ's.

2 Corinthians 10:8

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath Paul therefore has rights.

For though I should boast somewhat more of our right, of our power, which the Lord hath given us... There is nothing democratic about this. Paul received that power from the Lord. People have invented all sorts of terms to avoid the term "theocracy" = power to God. One of them is democracy = power to the people = exercising power from below. If you work from below upward, you work above your power. That is foolish, for it costs far too much strength and you will not sustain it. You also do not attack a city or army on a mountain. You do it the other way round. If you must have a battle, you do it from a hill. That is also where the fortresses are built. That is how it works everywhere: from above downward.

So it is with Paul too. He did not receive his power or right from some church council or synod, but from the Lord. For Paul that means he must render account upward, to Him who gave him this power. Hence you read that Paul says: For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach

not the gospel! (1 Corinthians 9:16). In other words, he had to do it, for he had received that commission from above, whatever the Corinthians might think of it: But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment (1 Corinthians 4:3). That still applies. If you have been appointed by men, you must render account to men. Whether it then concerns the work of the Lord? It does not seem so. The work of the Lord is committed to you by the Lord and not by someone else. The Bible says that you should recognise those who labour among you. Not that you must appoint elders. Elders are recognised as elders by the laying on of hands. And of course only if they are already there, for if they are not there, you cannot recognise them either. If, however, you think they are not there, the chance is great that you are mistaken. If they really are not there, then the Lord evidently did not consider it worth the trouble to give them. That is how it is.

2 Corinthians 10:8

For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed:

The authority Paul received, he received for edification = for building up, for the construction of a building.

To edify = to build, to construct. All things are lawful for me, but all things edify not (1 Corinthians 10:23). We may do all things, for we stand in liberty, but whether it is profitable and therefore edifying is another matter. That should be the standard. The profitable is that which edifies, namely the building up of the house, the temple, namely the Church.

Paul therefore received that authority for building up and not for their pulling down, for demolition. His work is a constructive work, though the Corinthians evidently see Paul's work as pulling down, as demolition, the opposite of that. On the other hand, if you want to teach people something, that often involves unlearning things. Sometimes you must unlearn certain habits, just as certain opinions. Otherwise the truth never penetrates. That was certainly the case with those Corinthians too. When it comes to religion, people always have their own opinions. One thinks this and another thinks that. One says: "I just think so," and another says: "I just think thus," but if you really want to learn something, especially from the Bible, you must first get rid of a great many prejudices. That is a work of pulling down, of breaking down.

Paul's received authority is therefore an authority for building up. He says that if he were now to boast somewhat more abundantly about it, he would not be ashamed. If he were to speak about his right and thus authority and thus duty to build up the Church, then he has quite a lot on his CV. Then he could boast in everything he has accomplished along the way, including the founding of this very local church at Corinth. That was after all the result of his original missionary labour.

2 Corinthians 10:9

That I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters.¹⁰ For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.

If I were then to boast somewhat more abundantly about that, you might perhaps tolerate my letters more easily. Then you would consider that those letters are from Paul, who in the service of the Lord has accomplished this and that and that, and also

that he in the service of the Lord has suffered this and that and that (though the latter is in chapter 11, where it is viewed from that side). They are alarmed by Paul's letters, which evidently radiate more authority than his personal appearance among the Corinthians. In hindsight that was probably the reason why Paul, despite his intentions, never visited the Corinthians again. They think Paul's rhetoric is below standard. Public speaking is a separate skill, and Paul evidently did not do very well at it, partly because of his outward, rather substandard appearance.

2 Corinthians 10:11

Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present.

The Corinthians are impressed by the letters and are provoked by them, but he is surely the same man when he is present with them. Though he may not look impressive and his rhetoric may be substandard, he is the same as the one who wrote the letters. Moreover, he stands there in the same position, with the right and authority that the Lord has given him.

Paul's judgement of himself

2 Corinthians 10:12

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

This is an old classic point, that people judge things subjectively. Here it says that they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves. In science such a thing is called a zero measurement. You measure one ruler against another ruler and it proves to be exactly right. If tomorrow, however, all rulers have become a bit shorter and you measure again, it proves to be exactly right again.

If people rate you too low, you immediately hear: "Yes, but what about that one and that one?" People who live under the law know very well that they are doing badly. That is why they have a lot of people around them of whom they can prove that they are doing even worse. So they are not doing so badly after all. If at school you got a 6, which is not a very high mark, you can always say that the average was a 4. That is how standards are adjusted. Then it is no longer about the absolute average on a scale of 1 to 10, but about what you think of it yourself.

People therefore measure themselves by themselves and think that it is then good. They think themselves good, but they have no higher standards. That is where the problem lies. When you then come with the Word of God and divine truth, it suddenly looks very different. That is what Paul says here to the Corinthians: "You measure yourselves by yourselves. You are your own standard, but that is of course no standard." You always meet your own standard. The truths that come from the Bible itself are absolute values. In relation to them we human beings prove to fall far short.

In the Netherlands you have flourishing local churches. If it had been a goat-breeding association, it would be a very well-functioning community. They keep nicely to the statutes, it is tremendously sociable, the association grows, everything is well organised, and everyone comes neatly to the meetings. No discordant notes are heard. Everyone has the same mind. That is the mind to keep to the rules. You can admire that, but is that the work of the Lord? If you really come in with the Bible and say: "Yes, but it

says thus and it says so...,” then they say: “Away with that Bible; it only brings division.” Then you say that you must have the Bible in it after all! They do that too, they say, but not in the plenary meetings, only in small groups. If you are really interested, then you can talk about it together once a month on Thursday evening. As if you could learn anything from that! The Bible must be put away as far as possible. With all respect for the association, that is not what it is about. It is about the work of the Lord. That is measured by other standards. That is what Paul is talking about. He has a different standard from that of the Corinthians. They measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves. That is in reality far below standard.

2 Corinthians 10:13

But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you.

That he once went to Corinth and preached the Gospel there falls within his measure. That is to say, that is the measure, the rule, that God has assigned to him.

Measure of the rule = two words, but they have the same meaning. The measure, the measuring rod, the rule. Another word for that is standard.

That measure of the rule has been assigned to him by God.

It is little known, but everything has its measure, its standard. God also sets standards within the Church.

Paul says here that his visit to Corinth falls within the standard God has set for him. In other words, it falls within his job description. It falls within his commission. That commission is his measure. He must keep to that. His visit to Corinth falls well within it. In other places you find the same terminology, but then from the other side. That is to say, that people should not entertain thoughts above the measure and should not appropriate to themselves or draw to themselves anything that goes beyond their own standard or measure. God sets that measure.

Romans 12:3

For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

What was given to him is grace. Unto him was this grace given, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8).

If you must not think more highly than you ought to think, then you must not think above the standard. You should think unto sobriety. Actually not unto sobriety, but unto measure: that you think up to a certain measure. There lies the boundary and you should not go beyond that boundary. That is immediately followed by: according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

God has set such a measure for everyone. We have received gifts. We are one body, but within that body we all have different gifts. Gifts in the sense of responsibilities. Our ministry, so to speak. That ministry, however, is limited. It is up to a certain measure. You should not go beyond that, for God has set that measure for everyone, or has distributed that measure to everyone.

It says: measure of faith. How is it that that measure is different for everyone? God gives differently, because all people are different. Determining that difference is faith, the measure of faith. Do we all then believe differently? Apparently so. Where faith stands,

you can also replace that word with faithfulness. That is the same word in the original text. The translators must therefore choose which word they use. If you translate it with faithfulness or reliability, you also understand better what it says: according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faithfulness. The idea is that the gifts we receive, we receive on the basis of our reliability. Nothing ugly is said by that. There are things we can bring. The Lord also expects of us that we can bring them. There are, however, also things we cannot, but others perhaps can. What a man achieves in his life is not determined by what he can do, but especially by what he cannot do. There, humanly speaking, lies the boundary. As regards our spiritual gifts, or the grace God gives us, it is in accordance with our ability. Some are startled by that, because they think God gives us those gifts or talents. That is true too, but talent in the Bible has a different meaning from in English. The meaning in English = innate qualities and possibilities. The biblical meaning is not what you can do, but actually what you must do, because you can do it. In Matthew 25 you find the parable of the talents. It admittedly does not concern us and our dispensation, but you do find there the meaning of the term.

Matthew 25:14

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

15 And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

That man gave his servants talents, according to each one's ability. They did not have those talents first. Why did they not all receive the same number of talents? Because each received according to his ability.

Ability = what you can do.

On the basis of what someone can do (that is therefore apparently different), he receives responsibility. You receive it. That is grace, but then you must also. You get a job, and if the boss is not corrupt, you get the job free and for nothing. You get a job and that is grace. Afterwards, however, you must. Then you have the responsibility to exercise that job, within the measure you have received. Whatever it is, it is responsibility, up to a certain level: this is your work, that is not.

So it is with us as children of God too. We receive according to ability. The spiritual gifts are not gifts we could not do before, but now that God has given them to us we suddenly can; you receive those gifts according to ability. Some indeed think that God has given them certain skills they did not have before. They can suddenly prophesy or speak in tongues. They could not do that before and now they can. That must then surely be a gift of the Holy Spirit. That is therefore not so. Those gifts, those gifts or talents, are responsibilities you receive from God. That is then your job. We receive something within a certain framework, and that framework is determined by the faithfulness that may be expected of us. That is dependent on our faith. If you load a donkey with a weight it cannot carry and it sinks through its knees, is the animal then unreliable? No, for the weight exceeded its carrying capacity. It could not handle that weight. That weight was above its measure. In the broad sense of the term man also has a maximum carrying capacity. The Lord takes that into account.

In the world people strive for the highest, they want to get out of it what is in it, they must push their boundaries and go beyond their boundaries. Then you become ill, get a burnout, and so on. At a certain point it goes wrong. That is exactly how it works among believers too. There is also a text for that: Covet earnestly the best gifts (1 Corinthians

12:31). The text that stands opposite it is this: not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith (Romans 12:3 NIV translation).

It is therefore about measure or rule. Look up the Scripture passages in the New Testament where those words occur and compare them with one another. The Lord sets us a standard, a measure. That afterwards the ability perhaps increases through practice in practice is so, but that is relatively very slight.

The Corinthians would be better off if they would listen to what the apostle has to tell them. He tells them things they themselves could not have thought out, of which Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man—also not into the hearts of the Corinthians, with all the philosophy and rhetoric taught there in Corinth. People would do better to listen to the Word of God and to Paul who was sent to them by God. It belongs to Paul's ministry that he not only came to them, but also that he writes them these epistles. That is admittedly outside the standards of the Corinthians, but within the standards God has given to Paul.

2 Corinthians 10:14

For we stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, as though we reached not unto you: for we are come as far as to you also in preaching the gospel of Christ: Stretching beyond our measure = going beyond the line, beyond the rule, outside his measure. He does not do that. He preached the Gospel to them. As far as he had announced to the Corinthians that he would yet visit them and he has not done so, he says of that that he has not gone beyond the line in that either, but that was already in the first chapters of this epistle.

2 Corinthians 10:15

Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly, 16 To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. He hopes one day to be enlarged according to his own rule, that they will fully appreciate him (that is also measuring) and recognise him in the position in which he stands as apostle of Jesus Christ. Not boasting of things without our measure in other men's labours... That is a dig, for they can well boast about the labours of those who were welcome in Corinth, such as Apollos and Cephas, but the coming into being of the church there was certainly the result of Paul's labour. It is admittedly not wrong that others continue the work there, but they are then building further on the foundation he laid there. He does not boast about that, but his attention to the church at Corinth falls precisely within his framework and his measure. He hopes that they will one day recognise that.

2 Corinthians 10:16

To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. It remains a difficult and rather cautious formulation. Sometimes it is even thought that Paul chose this formulation so that they would not understand at all what he says: it is pointless anyway.

Paul has not come to them again, but in the time when he should have been with them he was in other places. Earlier he wrote that wherever they come they are a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved and in them that perish (2 Corinthians 2:15). He has been in other places that are beyond you, further away than Corinth, not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. Elsewhere it says that he has been in other places where no one had ever preached the Gospel.

He cannot boast in the work of others. He has not drawn the work of others to himself. He has not taken responsibility from others and drawn it to himself. On the contrary, Corinth is his responsibility, because he once founded the church there.

2 Corinthians 10:17 -18

But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

18 For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

But whom the Lord commendeth...

Whom = the one who is praised by the Lord.

If you analyse the sentence, "whom" is not the subject, but the Lord. It is not about whether one has praise from oneself, so that one meets one's own standards, but whether you receive praise from God and meet His standards.

- The false apostles

It is still about the same thing, although a different heading has now been placed above it: the false apostles. These are therefore terms that come from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, the days of the struggle for power, both within and outside the church. There were true apostles, such as Paul, who fought for his apostolic authority, but there were apparently also false apostles. You were either good or you were a heretic. That was the terminology people thought in back then.

2 Corinthians 11:1

Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me! By Paul's own standards this whole story is folly. He himself also understands that this will not work. We should draw instruction from that. He writes here things which we say ought really to have remained behind closed doors, but they are nevertheless in the Bible, of course so that we might draw instruction from them. In the first place so that we as believers would not go beyond our measure, but also so that we would be faithful to the measure the Lord has given to each one of us. Where it comes from the Lord, we should not concern ourselves with it. Paul nevertheless does concern himself with it, but regards that as folly. Nevertheless it has important doctrinal content, namely that we are members of one and the same body and that to each one of us God has distributed certain responsibilities, gifts. He has therefore distributed to each one of us a certain measure.

Paul is here speaking about how he views his ministry.

And indeed bear with me! That is his wish: "Just listen to this now."

2 Corinthians 11:2

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

Jealous = jealousy. We consider that a negative term. A more neutral term is therefore this word: zealous. In the Old Testament the Lord says that He is zealous over His people. That does not mean He was busy, but zealous means that you consider something your possession and therefore your responsibility. If you are responsible for something, then in a certain sense it is your possession. You have authority over it. Israel was the possession of the Lord and so He was zealous over His people. The Lord became jealous (it then says zealous) when His people consorted with other gods. Here Paul says of himself that he is zealous with regard to that little flock there in Corinth. It should by now be clear that he regarded the church there as his responsibility. That church arose through his labour. He had given birth to that church, it says in another place, or begotten it. He is zealous over the Corinthians, with a zeal of God. That falls within his measure.

For I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ...

The problem with this verse is that it is more or less the most important one for underpinning the teaching that the Church is the bride of Christ, together with certain statements from Ephesians 5. In both passages the concept “bride” does not appear at all. But well, it is after all a handed-down teaching and you have to find Bible texts for it. This one is used for that. Yet that is not what this is about at all. It is about Paul’s relationship with the believers in Corinth. That was already the subject earlier and it remains the subject throughout the rest of the epistle. In these chapters it is not taught that the Church is the bride of Christ. That term does not appear in the Bible at all. The word “bride” is in any case not applied figuratively in the New Testament, unless perhaps somewhere in Revelation: The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready (Revelation 19:7). That is a reference to an Old Testament statement, in which it is clear that Israel is described as the bride, or as the wife. The problem is that people have placed the Church in the place of Israel, without realising what that place actually is. So they have also applied the expressions about Israel to the church, or the Church. And since Israel is the bride, they have stamped the same terminology onto the Church as well. Of course there is a core of truth in that, but the point is that the relationship between Christ and the Church is still far stronger than that between bride and bridegroom. If you teach that the Church is the bride of Christ, then in practice you deny the very strong fellowship that exists between Christ and the Church. If you are bride and bridegroom, then biblically speaking you have no fellowship. You have that in marriage and therefore only in the future. We, however, live in fellowship with the Lord. We are not His bride, but His body and therefore we are the Bridegroom.

The relationship between the Church and Israel is that of Bridegroom and bride. They will be united in the future. On closer inspection that is a marriage between brother and sister. That was quite normal among the patriarchs, by the way. The Church is not regarded as a woman, but as a man, who should also conduct himself manfully, as it says in 1 Corinthians 16:13. In Ephesians 4:13 it says that we should grow up into a perfect man. Moreover, the Church is described in Revelation 12 as a son, but if you see the Church as a bride, you miss that and therefore people have made it that the woman who gives birth to a male son there is the church. For that woman is Israel and Israel is

the church. Not according to the Bible, but this is common theology. The Church as a woman brings forth a male son there. That son is then Christ. That is why the Church is now on earth, to spread the Kingdom of Christ over all nations and thereby bring about the coming of Christ. An evangelical variant is exactly the same, but it is worded differently, namely that we must bring the Gospel to all nations and when that has happened, the Lord will come again. For we are the woman and must bring forth that Man. How you can still believe after that that the Church is the bride and Christ the Bridegroom is completely unclear.

So you should not try to read that sort of thing into this verse, for it simply is not there. In these chapters Paul explains his relationship with the Corinthians. That is why he says he is jealous, because he regards them as his possession. He feels threatened, disappointed, unrecognised, when it turns out that they connect themselves with, for example, Apollos, or Peter, or whoever else it may be. The church at Corinth is his responsibility.

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

As literally as possible it says: For with a zeal of God I am zealous over you; for I have joined you (harmozo = harmonise = join, fit together)....

That has been translated as “espoused,” from which it appears that the translators saw it as bride and Bridegroom.

Harmozo can refer to betrothal, but not necessarily. As said, harmozo = harmonise = different loose notes are joined together into one chord. They sound good together; that is at any rate the intention of it.

Further with the sentence:

For I have joined you to one husband, to present a chaste virgin to Christ.

We do not read here that it is about bride and Bridegroom. Someone has invented that Israel is admittedly the bride in the Old Testament, but that Christ in the New Testament has a different bride. So they have invented two brides, to save both the cabbage and the goat. So you have an Old Testament and a New Testament bride. That, however, is impossible at all, for in the Old Testament Israel is the wife of the Lord and not the bride. After that it is said that a new marriage will be contracted, which will not be ended. That marriage is contracted under the New Covenant and takes place at the coming of Christ. Who then is the Bridegroom? A fixed rule is that everything said in the Old Testament about Christ also applies to the Church, for the Church is in Christ. For we are the body of the Bridegroom. We are joined to Christ, but not in the capacity of bride. Are we chaste? Yes, for we are cleansed. Are we without spot or wrinkle? Yes. Are we therefore virginal? Yes.

Virginal = pure, unspotted, still completely sound, innocent. Virginality therefore does not by definition have to be something feminine. The 144,000 witnesses from Revelation 7 are called virgins, though they are men. So you may not simply substitute “woman” for the word “virgin.” Moreover, the idea that that virgin is then also by definition a bride...? Those are things that are usually linked together, but which in practice usually have little to do with one another.

Paul says: “I have joined you to one husband.” To whom? What are these epistles about? About the fact that Paul thinks and considers that that church in Corinth is his and falls under his authority and that he is responsible for it. To which husband has Paul therefore joined the Corinthians? To himself. Not to Apollos, not to Cephas. He has

joined that church to one husband, to Paul himself. Why? To present that church as pure and unspotted to Christ. For that he uses the word virgin. Elsewhere it is called pure, unspotted, without spot or wrinkle, or blameless. That has nothing to do with bride and Bridegroom. We will one day be presented before Christ, not at a wedding, but at our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, where every one shall receive the things done in his body, whether good (that is: within the measure Christ has assigned to us), or bad (that is what was outside the measure). Here it is about the fact that Paul regards that church as falling under his responsibility. That is probably somewhat foolish, but people should bear with that foolishness. At any rate it honours the apostle that he holds himself responsible for those communities of believers that arose through his labour.

2 Corinthians 11:28

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Whether that is justified? Probably so, because the ministry we have is a ministry within the Church, not dependent on a local church. That therefore also applies to Paul. Paul does what he can in that regard. In particular for the Corinthians. He has great problems with this church, for whatever he does there, they do not want to listen to him. They disregard the authority Paul has received from God. He tries to save what can be saved. He says that this is admittedly foolishness, but that is how he experiences it. Hence he is zealous over them.

He has joined them to one husband, to present a chaste virgin to Christ. "I have joined you to myself, even if only in my thoughts, and consider myself responsible, to present you thereafter pure and unspotted to Christ, one day at our appearing before the judgment seat of Christ." He wants to preserve them from strange influences from outside, which would again require all sorts of things to be cast down. If they would only listen to him, then there would be nothing wrong. Then they would also learn not to look at visible things, but to set their hope and expectation on the invisible things and more particularly on the present work of Christ for the building up of the Church. Then they would learn to be vertically oriented, instead of horizontally.

Paul wanted to preserve these Corinthians from all sorts of strange influences, which by the way he immediately attributes to the devil.

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

As the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty...Serpent is feminine and therefore it is about the subtilty of the serpent. Within the context of this passage you nevertheless arrive at the subtilty of Eve and not that of the serpent.

The serpent in the garden of Eden is the outward manifestation of a being that does not need that at all, namely of someone from the invisible world. He appears there in the garden in the form of a serpent. Linguistically speaking, someone who appears in the form of something or someone is by definition feminine. That is at any rate so in biblical typology. Even the Messiah is presented as feminine, because He is the expression of the essence of the invisible God. The outward, the external, is after all feminine.

It can therefore be about the subtility of the serpent. Moreover, when the serpent is introduced, it says: "Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field." Nevertheless, all sorts of subtility is also attributed to man.

If the serpent, the devil, must or wants to get a grip on man, then he goes after the females. That is namely easier. Without passing a value judgement, that comes because the feminine (as the glory of the man and the outward manifestation of things) is by definition receptive. The feminine is by definition hollow and should be filled. In general the woman is therefore more willing to listen to someone else. The devil therefore makes up to the woman, after which it automatically reaches the man, for the man is again sensitive to his wife and is responsible for her. 1 Timothy 2:14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression.

Here it does not say that Adam was not deceived, but that he was, but through his wife. If you read it wrongly, you think that it is still held against the woman. There is still something for this verse...

1 Timothy 2:11

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.

13 For Adam was first formed, then Eve.

Paul does not suffer a woman to teach, but suffers her to be in silence. It is even regarded as a favour. She does not have to. The trouble for the man is that he must at times. The man is expected to bear responsibility. If you are a subordinate, you do not have to. In 1 Corinthians 14:34 it says that it is permitted to the woman to be under obedience. She should therefore not teach in the church, because that would mean she rules over the man. That is why it says: I suffer not a woman to teach, but to be in silence. Giving instruction is at any rate exercising influence. If you say that rather strongly, it is called ruling. That is not given to the woman. That is why it says: For Adam was first formed, then Eve. She was deceived, but afterwards Adam certainly was too, through her. The question was why the devil then did it that way. Because it was easier. The women behind the men arrange many things. If women do not want something, then their men usually do not do it either. These are by the way words of a woman (who?). She also said that Christianity only became a success after the introduction of Mary, the mother of God. Only after a female god was invented within Christianity did it become a success, of course measured by earthly historical standards.

Here in 1 Timothy 2 it is explained that women would do what women simply do. As it stands it is 100% objectionable in our days, for all that was abolished long ago. The Bible, however, does not change.

Back to 2 Corinthians 11...

2 Corinthians 11:3

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

If your minds are corrupted, they no longer work properly. It is not merely about the functioning of the senses, but of course about the interpretation of what one perceives. Your minds = your understanding.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtility, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. Corrupted by whom

then? By false apostles, who are implicitly compared and identified with the serpent itself and thus with the devil. The chance is not so great that the Corinthians understood that. Nevertheless, people deviate. That is the accusation you read in this. They deviate from the simplicity that is in Christ. Some think that if something is very complicated, it is very intelligent and therefore must be right. Because it is complicated it seems true. That is of course not always so. In English we have the saying: simplicity is the mark of the true. That is to say, of the truth. If it is complicated, we have another saying for that: the lie needs many words. That is usually how it goes. It is in the Bible, but how do we get round it? People devise that a college must be founded. There theology and philosophy are taught, which in practice is simply the same thing, with this difference that in philosophy God is not spoken of and if God is spoken of anyway, it is called theology. Otherwise it is completely identical. It has only one purpose, namely to create a worldview (possibly a god-image) outside what God Himself has revealed. That is why it is also called contradicting.

In the Bible the Jews are called a gainsaying people, but they were enormously religious. The Word of God is contradicted or ignored and people try to make a worldview (which by the way is impossible) outside God's Word. That is what the serpent does. In short, separating creation from the Creator. Thus the Creator is put outside the door. That applies in the world, but unfortunately also in so-called Christianity. The Lord says in Revelation 3:20 in the letter to Laodicea: Behold, I stand at the door, and knock. You do have such an institution, but I stand outside it. People have made statutes, a great many. With them they therefore determine the course of affairs themselves and shut the Lord out. Not only the Lord, for anyone who does not keep to the statutes is also shut out. Be that as it may, this is the history of Christianity. People make packages with statutes, or with canon law and all sorts of governing bodies, layered, so that everything is firmly nailed down. It must after all remain stable. Many therefore only meet the Lord outside a church institution. Only after they stepped out of the church, because they wanted nothing more to do with it, did they run into the Lord. Outside, because He was not inside. These are hard words, but in practice these things simply go that way. That is described here and it is the work of the devil.

Simplicity = singleness.

It is about one thing only and it is also about one goal only. The problem of man is that he can multiply that one thing and has all sorts of secondary intentions. That makes life so complicated. The more people want to keep things in hand or organise them, the more difficult it becomes. You soon need an army of officials to keep everything under control. Life has become enormously complicated. That is not necessary at all, if only man did not have such pride. We have fought quite a few wars against various European countries over the centuries, but now we suddenly have to unite. They are our enemies, but now we make agreements with them. Then they are supposedly our friends, but you should not think that we will no longer be deceived. Economically no one understands it any more. It has become so complicated that it can no longer be analysed. There is actually only one solution: simply abolish it. That will also happen according to the Bible. First through the Antichrist. He abolishes the whole system. Then everything is flat and he has the power. He then rebuilds it, but afterwards the system goes flat again, when the Lord comes and concerns Himself with it. Then He will apply His system and that system has long been in the Bible. Everyone could therefore have known how it

should be, but people have other interests and so the Bible is set aside and so on. Simplicity then!

2 Corinthians 11:4

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

For if he that cometh... Who comes then? Not Paul. Instead of him others therefore came to Corinth. He is talking about that serpent.

God had spoken and then another came. Historically false apostles came, though that term is not used here. In Galatians 2:4 it speaks of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage. Are those false brethren, or is it just like with coins? Is a false coin a coin? Is a false brother a brother? The Bible at any rate calls them so. Are false apostles apostles? We do not know, but at any rate they are people who preach another Jesus.

Is there then another Jesus? Many speak about Jesus and sing about Him and speak and preach about Him. If you listen to that you can indeed wonder who they are talking about. Sometimes it seems as though they are talking about Baal. You no longer recognise the God of the Bible in it. At least, He is not specified as such. By the time Christmas comes round again, people talk about the little child born in the family of Mary and that poor carpenter Joseph. They were so poor that they had to wrap the child in swaddling clothes. You no longer recognise Jesus, the Son of David, in that at all. He is the Heir of the throne of David; He is the stem-holder of the royal family of Israel and therefore at any rate of Judah; He is treated with deference and addressed as: Jesus, Thou Son of David. This is just like: Your Royal Highness. We are after all talking about the David, the founder of the greatest royal dynasty on earth. That little child in the manger with those poor parents, we do not know that one. Wrapped in swaddling clothes? There is nothing special about that. But why is it then mentioned in the Bible? Of course because of the typology. That is the last thing they found of the Lord, the linen cloths in His grave. The grave was empty, only the cloths still lay there. Those cloths are by definition of linen, as a picture of His priestly function, once, in advance. That is to say, He will save His people from their sins.

You should not just interpret those things differently. At any rate it suggests that people have another Jesus than the Bible presents to us. That therefore happened.

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. You taste the irony: if now someone came who preached another Jesus or another gospel and another spirit, then you might well bear with him, for you did not get that from me. For that is another Jesus than I preached, another spirit than I received, and another gospel. Then Paul can imagine that they no longer want to hear him and prefer to listen to another. According to Galatians 1 there is however no other gospel. Moreover, whoever preaches another gospel is accursed. There is also no other Spirit. Though, John says: Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God (1 John 4:1). Or: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist,

whereof ye have heard that it should come (1 John 4:3). There is therefore another spirit. And another Jesus? Such a Jesus people construct themselves; they invent him. These false apostles in practice claim to preach the same Jesus, the same Spirit, and the same Gospel as Paul did. But then why do they not want to listen to Paul? Very simply, because Paul has far more to tell than these others who might come. In 2 Corinthians 12 he says that he indeed still has much more to tell, but that he is not given the opportunity, because they do not want to hear him. He has much more to tell because he was caught up even to the third heaven, because he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter, and things of that sort.

People have always been inclined, right up to today, to limit biblical truth. Everything has to be stripped away, so that only a very small remnant remains, about which people then become extremely fanatical. But is that then the truth, about that God with a capital G? Nothing remains of the biblical message. It is stripped bare, after which you are left with a little child in the manger and a man who walks around with some peculiar ideas and is then supposed to be the founder of Christianity. An outsider will say that we have had plenty more people like that. Others say that you should take all those people together, for they have to do with the revelation of spiritual things. Throughout history there have been so many people used for that purpose, and Jesus is of course one of them. Mohammed too, and Buddha, to name just a few. In this way these things are generalised and reasoned away.

Biblical truth, however, is not just a little bit. It is not limited to the fact that Jesus came to earth and died for our sins. That is true enough, but it is only a very small piece of the truth. Someone who is pious then says: "Yes, but that is enough for me." Yet you do not win the war with that, not even against the devil. The Bible is far richer. That is the point, and that is what Paul regrets. He wanted to share that richness with them, but he is not given the chance. They are probably only interested in the fact that Jesus—for that is how He is preferably called—died for their sins, and that is it. For the rest they make their own decisions. They do not need Paul for that.

Paul therefore said that if someone came who preached something different, fine, then they might well receive such a person, but as long as it is about the same Jesus, the same Spirit, and the same Gospel, what then is the problem? That problem is dealt with in chapter 12.

2 Corinthians 11:5

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

The very chiefest apostles? In the eyes of Paul or of those apostles themselves? They were not so very chief, but they considered themselves so. Or else, that the Corinthians considered them so. Whoever they may be, Paul supposes that he himself was not a whit behind them.

2 Corinthians 11:6

But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

The Corinthians think that Paul falls short rhetorically (see 2 Corinthians 10:10). Yet the question is not whether someone is a good speaker, but whether he also has something to say.

Talking comes from the Hebrew *parat* = to throw away, to scatter, to waste. That is the difference with speaking. One person can speak well and another cannot. Some can express their thoughts well in words, but they have nothing of substance to say. Then it is just chatter. Unfortunately the average sermon consists of that. They are fine words, but they go nowhere. The same applies to the average speech of a politician. They may have a message, but it is then not told.

Words usually also have the intention of not saying things.

Paul was therefore apparently poor in speech. Perhaps he even stammered, like Moses. Isaiah also had difficulty with it. Yet it is not about the words, about the art of formulation, but about the content.

Paul does not deny that he is poor in speech, but against that he is not poor in knowledge. By that he means that he has far more to tell than those people whom he here calls the very chiefest apostles. He has a broader, richer, more comprehensive message.

Some say: "Just give me the simple Gospel," by which they mean that we only need to know one thing, namely Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But what then are all those other 1,000 pages in the Bible about? People are not interested in that. They wonder why they should know all that. But the Lord has given us His Word. If you do not know why you should know all that, then ask Him.

Though the answer is also simply in the Bible, namely that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Paul therefore has far more to tell. 2 Corinthians 11:6 But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.

The Corinthians know that too, for Paul spent some time among them. They know him. They know who he is and what he has to say. It is really absurd that he still has to speak about it.

2 Corinthians 11:7

Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely?

Have I done something wrong; have I missed something? Have I blundered? Paul abased himself among the Corinthians, which means he made himself subservient, subordinate.

Philippians 3:20

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

What do you mean, vile body? That is our servile body. The whole epistle is about that. How we should serve God, following the example of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who humbled Himself. Also in the likeness of men He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Abased = obedient, servile.

Paul therefore made himself servile to the Corinthians. How? Because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely. He never asked or received a penny for it. He was “sponsored” from other places.

2 Corinthians 11:8 - 9

I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.

9 And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

This seems a hyperbole, an exaggeration. “Robbed” is a very strong expression. Nevertheless he received money from other churches to be able to preach the Gospel to the Corinthians. Even when he had too little money to live on, he did not burden the Corinthians with it.

2 Corinthians 11:9

For that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself.

When he was short the brothers from Macedonia supplied.

He never burdened them with it = troubled them with it.

What he does not describe here, but is in Acts 18:3, is that Paul worked in Corinth to provide for his own support. He did that deliberately. The preaching of the Gospel is after all the preaching of grace and not of wages for works. As far as there is anything to work in the service of the Lord, that is in the first place still grace, that we may and can do it. Our sufficiency is of God, who has made us able ministers of the new testament. You wonder why the Corinthians held it against him that he did it that way.

2 Corinthians 11:10

As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia.

Corinth lies in the regions of Achaia. Paul had resolved to receive no contribution from the Achaians and thus also from the Corinthians. It was nice that he could afford that, but he was enabled to do so by the Macedonians. Thereby he also demonstrates that he loves them...

2 Corinthians 11:11

Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth.

Earlier he said that he regards them as his children. You do not take wages from your children. You do something for them because you love them.

Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. That is also the only explanation for the fact that Paul writes them two such long epistles, in the hope that he may yet bring them something; in the hope that they may perhaps one day later read those paper epistles again and yet come to insight.

2 Corinthians 11:12

But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we.

Paul does not kick them directly on the shins, but indirectly of course he does. For they seek an occasion, an argument, to get rid of him. They seek something against him, to justify that they do not want to listen to him. The only real reason is of course that they do not want to hear his message. The essence yes, but the consequences apparently not.

There is nothing for them to glory in. They do not get that far.

What I do, that I will do = Paul will simply continue not to burden them and not to trouble them. He loves them and wants to teach them gladly about the work the Lord would do, in particular the idea that we as believers are not just a separate kind of people wandering a bit lost on earth, but that we are a heavenly people with a heavenly calling, with a heavenly inheritance and future. That does not stand apart from the earth, but it means that the Church has been promoted from earth to heaven, with a heavenly home, from which our future ministry as Church will also be practised. Our citizenship is in heaven. God has raised us up together with Christ and seated us together in heavenly places in Christ. We are a heavenly people, with already now a heavenly position, but also with a heavenly future.

The problem with most Christians is that they want to live here and now, today. They have needs now, or have problems now. They are uncertain now, or have something on their mind now, and the Lord must provide for that now. They put themselves at the centre and have no view of the longer term, of the work the Lord would do on them, in them, and through them, educating them to maturity.

Paul therefore says that he will continue with this and he does it in this way, to cut off occasion from those who desire occasion. For they seek to get rid of Paul. At any rate they cannot say that he does it for a living, or to profit from it. Thus he gives them no handle where they seek a stick to beat him with.

The intention is that they may be found even as we, says Paul. Namely humble and servile. You notice that when there are some cynical remarks, the translators often did not understand that it was meant cynically. That is why these texts are often difficult to access. What it is about is that Paul is an example for the Church as such and therefore also for believers individually. That applies in a positive sense, but just as much in a negative sense, for the last pericope of this chapter has as heading: the sufferings of Paul for the Gospel. In that too he is an example. That is precisely what is so problematic, for people always think that salvation is a gain. Of course it is, but insofar as it is a gain, that is not the primary intention of it. It is not about you needing the Lord or something like that, nor that the Lord needs you, for that is equally untrue. It is about the fact that we as human beings are born on earth and know nothing. Then the God of heaven and earth makes Himself known to us and He wants us to listen to Him. That is all.

That it has consequences, for possible needs for example, will be so. The Bible speaks little about that. In general it is about God speaking and making Himself known, but that man closes his ears. He does not want to hear and thereby becomes hardened, blind, and deaf. That is why we do Bible study and come together, so that we may hear and believe the Word of God. That we may come to the knowledge of the truth. That is what it is about.

That it then works out somewhat is so. If we eat something, the food finds its way further in the body. It is digested and releases its nutrients. So it is with the Word of God too: you only need to take it in and that changes your life. That Word does its work in us. It is about taking in that Word of God and coming to the knowledge of the truth, regardless of what day of the week, what time, and what rites and what liturgy we must use. All such things have nothing to do with it.

God speaks and we should say: "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." Whether He then gives us a commission or not, that then has not so much more to do with it. That is a normal outworking of the Word of God on our part and our submission to it on the other. It is not more difficult than that. You can oppose all those denominations and institutions: it is always beside the point, because there it is no longer about knowledge of the truth, but about maintaining an association, an own club, in the name of the Lord. You do not find that in the Bible. There you find that the Word of God is preached: "Thus saith the Lord..." The intention is that we should listen to it. And whether you listen to it or not, it is about it being preached, whatever the effect may be. So that you also cannot say afterwards that you did not know, because you never heard it.

That is precisely why the Lord sent prophets, "for," He said, "that they may know that a prophet of the Lord has been among them." It is only about the Word of God, which is light and would shine in a dark world. That is what Paul is concerned with too. He only wants to make known the Word of God. In this case even to believers, but apparently those believers have imposed censorship. There are certain things they do not want to know and do not consider useful.

2 Corinthians 11:13

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

False apostles = in Greek it says: pseudoapostoloi – sham apostles.

Whether they are apostles and thus sent by God? That may be, but they do not do their work.

The very chiefest apostles from verse 5 are here called false apostles. That appears from "such." For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ.

Transforming themselves into... = presenting themselves as...

They present themselves as sent ones of Christ. They are not, says Paul.

Therein lies the whole problem; not only in Corinth, but in Christendom in general.

The Bible says that God gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). The consequence of that is that, since God gave them, the believers, the church members therefore, do everything to sideline them, for they have their own ideas about what the Church needs. Moreover, they have their own idea about what the Church is as a "thing." They want to build the Church themselves. That is what it comes down to in practice. Those people sent by God are therefore by definition troublesome. They disturb the course of affairs. There are plenty of examples of that, from the whole biblical history and thus also from the history of Israel. They always had their own plans. Then a prophet came and he was killed, either literally or figuratively. They did not want those prophets. Those who told them exactly what they wanted to hear were considered prophets and those were therefore the false prophets. In our days it is still the same. There are people who

present themselves as sent ones of Christ, but they are not sent ones of Christ at all. They seek a job, or want to learn and distill from it an idea of personal power. For power is tied to teaching. Without authority there is little to teach. There is no authority any more and so people must find out for themselves. That is how it is going in our society at the moment. It is going to ruin because of that. In the past quite a few cultures were destroyed by that. History teaches us, however, that history teaches us nothing. They pretend to be apostles of Christ.

2 Corinthians 11:14

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. That they do so is no marvel (you need not be surprised at it), for Satan himself does exactly the same. He presents himself as an angel of light. That he is not, for he is the prince of darkness. He adapts to the one he has in his sights. To the Roman Catholic he is Roman Catholic, to the Buddhist he is Buddhist. It makes no difference to him. If he has something to seek in the charismatic movement, then he is particularly charismatic. Or among the Mormons (who also speak in tongues), then he is Mormon. He has invented all those other religions, to divert from the truth. He succeeds well at that. In the Netherlands today all religions are more or less integrated. When you go to the dentist, you can just see a few Buddha statues behind the counter. When you go out to eat, you see them in many restaurants. If you say something about it, you are listened to benevolently. You can make statements about your expectation of Maitreya, or tell that you have a spirit guide (in Roman Catholicism such a one is called a guardian angel). You can freely tell that you will come back as a seagull after your death. People consider that quite normal nowadays. But if you say that you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and believe what is in the Bible, then you have a problem. That is the Netherlands! The devil is therefore doing his work well. How it is with the personnel of our Lord, you can have your doubts about that. Unfortunately! The message of the serpent in the garden is: "God has said that, but He did not mean it that way. Now I will tell you what God really meant." That last is then called light, new light, but it all comes from the devil. So others say: "Yes, the Bible and Jesus, all fine, but then came Mohammed": new light. Then we got yet another, Joseph Smith, with the Book of Mormon: new light again. Not very original, for written on golden plates. The Koran was already that too. Those plates naturally disappeared immediately.

2 Corinthians 11:15

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. Which ministers? Those false apostles. Here they are called ministers of Satan. The superlative apostles from verse 5 are therefore also called ministers of the devil. It is no great thing = it is no marvel, from the previous verse. If his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness = which they are not. But do they not preach the Gospel anyway, and Jesus and Him crucified? That may well be so, but if it is no more than that, then it is only a part of the truth, and a part of the truth is a whole lie. An example? There was a woman who, as soon as Paul and Silas went out onto the street, followed them and cried out loudly: "These men are the

servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.” There is nothing false in that statement. The common explanation is that she nevertheless said something wrong, because Paul rebuked her after all. People then came up with the idea that she did not say “who proclaim the way of salvation to you,” but “who proclaim a way of salvation to you,” from which one might infer that there are multiple ways of salvation. That is not the case, and therefore she had to be rebuked. In that case one would also have to rebuke Paul, for in Romans 1 it says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. There too it does not say that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Yet that is what it means, for there is no other power unto salvation. So what did that woman in Philippi say that was wrong? Nothing—but she was sent by the devil, for she was possessed by a spirit of divination (a Pythonic spirit, as the original text puts it), a fortune-telling spirit, which was then rebuked and cast out. So what did she say that was wrong? In the first place, the devil takes mastery over the Gospel. Why does he do that? So that he can then limit it afterwards. Moreover, the apostles preached far more than merely the way of salvation. The Bible preaches far more as well. It is a great misunderstanding to think that the Bible contains only how I or you can be saved. Of course that matter is addressed, but it is not the essence of what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches us who God is, by means of what He has done in the past, what He is doing in the present, and what He will do in the future. That God is the One who has spoken from the beginning and who also actually carries out what He has spoken. Man’s dilemma then is whether he will take any notice of it or not. Does he accept it, or does he go his own way, independent of all that God has spoken and is doing?

You know how that goes. The English government also has all sorts of plans and carries them out. Personally you think: “Let them get on with it, but I want nothing to do with it. I’ll go my own way and I don’t support it either.” As far as God is concerned, He makes known what He is doing; He also makes known how we can perhaps be involved in it, but you can also say that you want nothing to do with it and go your own way.

It is not about how we are saved, but about what God does in general. For He is making out of this old creation a new one, for reasons that have been partly revealed to us and partly not—probably because we could not imagine or understand them anyway. That does not matter. At any rate He has presented it to us in an understandable way. Be that as it may, He is making out of this old creation a new one, and His question is: “Are you coming along? Do you also want to become a new creation? That can be done; just come with Me and I will tell you along the way what I expect of you.” But even more, along the way He tells us who He is. That is what Paul writes to the Philippians. He counted everything he had in this world as loss and dung, that Christ might be his gain, that he might know Him and the power of His resurrection.

The classic orthodox Christian creed is this: the Bible is the self-revelation of the Godhead. That is what it is all about.

“Who proclaim to us the way of salvation”? Yes, that is true, but it is only a fragment, and in it man is promptly placed at the centre. Unfortunately, in Protestant theology it really comes down to just one thing: the salvation of man. People scarcely get any further than that. The whole Bible is fitted into the individual’s own personal problems and experience, and there it stops. That God is working on a far higher level and working out a plan throughout the whole of world history? Who cares about that? “What good is that to me; what do I get out of it; what difference does it make to me; how does it build

me up?” People cannot imagine it, and so it remains with that one subject. That is tragic. For the apostle Paul it was tragic because he was not given the opportunity to make these things known.

It is no marvel that those ministers of Satan transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, for Satan does exactly the same thing; but of course it has consequences for them. They will be judged according to their works. They will one day have to give account before the judgment seat of Christ. The question then will not be whether they told people the Gospel, but what they withheld. You are among believers. One may assume that those so-called apostles who came in among the believers certainly agreed with the biblical truth that man is saved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That church had only recently been founded. So if you want to establish your power there, you will at least have to align yourself with that truth. But the commission of the apostles was not merely to tell the Gospel, but the whole counsel of God. That is how it stands in Acts 20, where Paul takes leave of the believers in Ephesus. He speaks there to the elders of the church at Ephesus and says...

Acts 20:20

And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house,
21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. “What was profitable” = what was for the building up and edification of the Church. That is the whole of Scripture, for the whole of Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable unto...

Acts 20:27

For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Not what he knew of it or what he thought useful, but the whole counsel of God. This immediately puts an end to all ultra-dispensationalism, for Paul had already proclaimed the whole counsel of God and therefore already knew it, so that he would not later receive that knowledge from God as an addition to what he already knew. Moreover, he wrote to the Galatians that anyone who would add anything to it is accursed, and that anyone who preaches another gospel than he preached is accursed. The devil has done everything possible, in every conceivable way, to proclaim after the closing of the Bible that God has revealed Himself anew. Sometimes to certain ones among us who have a special favour with the Lord, who after much prayer and spiritual struggle and fasting, after years, have finally heard from the Lord how things really are. But God has given us His Word. You can study that. If you sit with the Bible closed and ask the Lord to reveal His Word to you, He will not do it. Nor while we are leafing through the Bible. We are to study the Bible. Of course not everyone has the ability to do so. That does not matter, however, for in that case the Lord sends someone across your path to explain it to you. That is how it works. Perhaps you first have to walk a stretch of the path yourself, but if you seek the truth, you will find it.

The Lord makes Himself known and for that purpose sends someone like Paul, who takes leave of the Ephesians with these words:

Acts 20:28

28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among

you, not sparing the flock.

30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

That is the history of Christendom. The devil has done everything possible to add something to the counsel of God. The rise of Islam is of exactly the same order as the rise of Mormonism. The latter is no more Christian than Islam is. How is it Christian? There was a Bible, and something is added. Though even that would be something, for in reality something is laid over it. Moreover, the Bible is then closed. That is always how it works. Other people do not then have a specific book, but for example receive new light, revelations from God, and derive their authority from that. In all cases it is of the devil, because it is laid over the Bible.

Discerning prophecy is very simple. If it is in accordance with the Bible, then you did not need it. If it is in conflict with the Bible, then you do not need it either. The last prophets are those of the first generation of Christianity, who by God revealed how it stands with the sayings, prophecies, and promises in the Old Testament. It is chiefly about how those prophecies and promises are fulfilled to the Church in this present time. After that has been done, that is the end of the matter and the Bible is closed. That was it. This is the whole of Scripture and this is the whole counsel of God. Whoever adds anything to it, let him be accursed. Whoever does that will have to give account for it, for...

2 Corinthians 11:15

Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.

Which ministers? Those false apostles. They are here called ministers of Satan. The very chiefest apostles from verse 5 are therefore also called ministers of the devil.

It is no great thing = it is no marvel, from the previous verse.

As the ministers of righteousness = that they are not.

But do they not preach the Gospel and Jesus and Him crucified? That may well be so, but if it is no more than that, then that is only a part of the truth and a part of the truth is a complete lie. Example? There was a woman who, as soon as Paul and Silas went out into the street, walked with them and cried aloud: "These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation." There is nothing false in that. The common explanation is that she still said something that was not good, for Paul rebuked her after all. People then devised that she did not say "who shew unto us the way of salvation," but "who shew unto us a way of salvation," from which you could deduce that there are several ways of salvation. That is not so and therefore she had to be rebuked. In that case you would also have to rebuke Paul, for in Romans 1 it says that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. There too it does not say that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. Yet that is what it means, for there is no other power unto salvation.

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10). This applies, at least, if we are speaking of believers. Unbelievers will have to give account before the great white throne on the Last Day.

For however that may be, if it is their own works, then they are worth nothing before God. Those works will burn up, like wood, hay, and stubble. They will be found naked and not clothed; let alone overclothed. It is, after all, a form of enmity against the Word

of God. You can reject the Gospel and reject the Lord Jesus Christ; then you are an enemy of God. But if you do accept it and then reject the rest of the Bible, you are just as much an enemy of God. It is on a different level, but you are still opposing the work of the Lord. He would reveal Himself and lead us into all the truth. Moreover, He would teach us to understand what the essence of the Church really is, and what the calling of the Church is.

Then we are not merely talking about the Church going to heaven, for we are already there. We have a heavenly position. That position gives us, at any rate in the future, responsibility for earthly matters.

People have lost that thought. What our position is in the whole plan of salvation of God, on which the calling of the Church rests, and where it will lead—generally speaking, people have no idea whatsoever. Why not? Because they are not really interested in the Church, but only in themselves. They are interested in the Church only insofar as it can mean something for them. But anyway...Paul, so to speak, flings open the kitchen door here. He grants the Corinthians a glimpse into his responsibilities. The folly of it is that they will not understand it anyway, because it is another world. The Corinthians are children who cannot bear responsibility. They still need milk and not solid food. They still have to grow up to sonship. To these toddlers, as it were, a glimpse is granted into the life of mum and dad, of the grown-ups. A father or mother explains what his or her responsibility is, but a child understands nothing of it. The parents love the child, but the child absolutely does not understand the position of the parents. Usually that comes much later.

The only reason Paul writes this can only be that he hopes they will come to understand it later on. That these words will stick with them, precisely because they do not understand them now, in the hope that they will one day understand them.

- Paul's Sufferings for the Gospel

2 Corinthians 11:16

I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little.

“Receive me as a fool, that I may boast a little too.” The Corinthians are foolish and they boast. They are proud. Paul says: “Let me become foolish for a moment too, then I can boast a bit as well.” If he lowers himself to their level, he can join in with them. After that, he does indeed go into outward things that actually do not matter.

2 Corinthians 11:17

That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting.

He does not speak after the Lord, not at the Lord's level, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. What confidence of boasting?

2 Corinthians 11:18

Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also.

Many glory after the flesh, so Paul will do the same for once. Many have rooted their pride in their foolishness. Ignorance often leads the ignorant to assert all sorts of things with great certainty. They do not know what they are talking about anyway. People do

not know better and then have a big mouth. The more one has learned, the more uncertain one becomes, because one realises that the world and knowledge are rather complicated and that there are a great many things of which one has absolutely no clue. The Corinthians do not know and therefore have great certainty. That is called a solid ground on which one can boast. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1). Here, however, they have a solid ground in foolishness.

And because many glory after the flesh, Paul will do so too for once. He lowers himself to that level.

2 Corinthians 11:19 - 20

For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise.

In the next verse he explains it...

20 For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face.

Someone comes and subjugates you. He puts you to work. It does not necessarily have to be subjection to the law of the Lord, but to law in general. That is how it goes in denominations. You can become a member, but then you must submit to church law. If you study law, what law is that? Officially it is civil law and canon law. That is where the expression comes from. That determined life here in Western Europe for a long time. Civil and canon law usually overlapped and intertwined. Moreover, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities fought each other. That was, of course, a political power struggle. On the other hand, both authorities were again identical, because the civil authority was often represented by a bishop or the pope.

So if you become a member of a church, you are immediately made subservient. That brings obligations. The most important one is, of course, that you have to pay. Just like with the civil authorities, you have to declare your income. In short, you are made subordinate.

Many people also want to be made subservient. They feel useless and join some Christian community. Then every fortnight they become a car-park attendant and have to show churchgoers their parking space on Sundays. Then they have a role and suddenly become important. But they are made subservient to people, or to an organisation. Does that also make them servants of the Lord? It could, but it is not self-evident or necessary. On the other hand, there are nice clubs within the church community and social help. You can join in. It can be a jolly affair. Fortunately, they do not bother you with long sermons. The meetings are really super sociable.

“If a man devour you” = you are made subservient and thereby devoured. The flock is made subservient to the shepherd, and so the shepherd devours the flock. The shepherd does not feed the flock, but himself (see Ezekiel 34:1–19).

“If a man smite you on the face” = if you are struck in the face by someone. That is called masochism. It is a psychological phenomenon that is not exclusively related to sexuality. It is an attitude to life. Those people are out to be mistreated. Then at least they are somebody, even if only that they are then pitiful and can appeal to all kinds of helpers. There are people who allow that to happen. Is that honourable? No...

2 Corinthians 11:21

I speak concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also.

I speak concerning reproach = I speak to our shame, for these are shameful things. On the one hand people allow this sort of thing to happen to them, and on the other hand there are people who do this sort of thing. So it can apply to the Corinthians themselves, who let this be done to them, but also to the false apostles, who apparently do this sort of thing. In any case, it is dishonourable. You could say that Paul would have done better not to write about it, because it is all so negative, but some things simply have to be named. You can say that you must preach that you are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus, but sometimes it is also useful to tell what you are then saved from. Of course, you would come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and actually come to know Him, also in the practice of life. That you are then also struck in the face and made subservient, that is true, but then not for the sake of people, but for the sake of God. Paul suffered for the sake of the Gospel.

“As though we had been weak.” Paul did not strike them in the face, did not make them subservient; he did not exalt himself above them. And now they say of him that he is weak. We already encountered that in earlier chapters. Paul now goes at it boldly = bold = unrestrained. Like children can be unrestrained. They are bold, unrestrained; they do not know where the boundaries lie. Other words for that are presumptuous, or possibly outspoken.

2 Corinthians 11:22

Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.

“They” = those pseudo-apostles.

He does not say: “Are they Jews?” Paul emphatically distances himself from his being a Jew. He is regarded by others as a Jew, but he himself does not use that term. He says of himself that he was a Pharisee, an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. Being a Jew has a strong religious connotation. He cannot use that, because it is about Christians. Moreover, there may still be the idea behind Hebrews, Israelites, and seed of Abraham that it does not refer to the Jews, but to the ten tribes of Israel. Or at least that part of Israel that is not Jewish. That is not necessarily a matter of the two or the ten tribes, but now I may be straying a bit off topic.

Achaia, namely the southern part of Greece, of which Corinth was the capital, was originally populated by Israelites. The whole of Greece, in fact. That happened already before and otherwise immediately after the exodus from Egypt. It is indeed not written in black and white in the Bible, but it is indicated in it, namely that Israelites disappeared. They disappeared from Egypt, but did not arrive in Canaan. They settled somewhere else. If you then search further in secular history, you find them elsewhere in the world, including in Greece. It concerns parts of the tribe of Dan and Judah. People from other tribes also settled there. In Achaia, for example, lies the city of Sparta, which was a city of the Simeonites. The Spartans were therefore Simeonites. They were strongly martial (warlike, bellicose) people; they were fighters. That corresponds completely with the nature of the tribe of Simeon.

The Simeonites we later encounter in Britain, for the Silures, under the leadership of King Caradoc, were also Simeonites. The Romans could not stand up to them, for the Simeonites were such fighters (Genesis 49:5,6).

So a part of the tribe of Simeon was responsible for the founding of Sparta. How they came from the mainland of Greece to Britain is recounted by Geoffrey of Monmouth. This area of Achaia and Macedonia, but also Asia Minor, present-day Turkey, was largely populated by Israelites. Did Paul know that? He was a learned man and one may assume that he knew who those peoples were who lived there. So it is still a question whether he means Jews. Look, Peter was a Jew, like the other disciples. Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, but he called himself a Roman. If he speaks of Hebrews and of Israelites and the seed of Abraham, why does he not say that he is of the Jews? Moreover, among the company of the apostles there were quite a few people who were not Jews at all, but they could still have been Hebrews, Israelites, and seed of Abraham. These terms are therefore used to deliberately avoid the term “Jewish”, while we, through certain tradition and ignorance, are inclined to interpret all those terms as “Jewish”.

Be that as it may, those pseudo-apostles are regarded as Israelites. Paul says that he is too: “Do they descend from Heber? So do I. Do they descend from Abraham? So do I.” Arabs, by the way, too. They are accused of being anti-Semitic. It is, however, generally known that they themselves are Semites. According to themselves on a higher level than the Jews. That is precisely what Islam is about. It is not as narrow as only the Jews.

2 Corinthians 11:23

Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Are they actually ministers of Christ? In verses 14 and 15 he says that they pretend to be. Do they present themselves as ministers of Christ? Paul says that in that case he is more than they, greater. That is to say, he is equal in all those things, but where it concerns ministers of Christ, then he is more. Then he mentions things that are arithmetically more, but in practice actually less. It is not about these so-called apostles teaching the Corinthians things that might be unbiblical. That is nowhere said. But that they apparently limit that biblical truth and thus withhold a part of the biblical truth and do not want to tell it. They do not proclaim the whole counsel of God. And you know how it is: a half-truth is considered a whole lie. In that sense Paul is therefore more than they, because he proclaims the whole counsel of God. He is greater than those false apostles and he shows that by means of a whole list of negative things. Now follows a long enumeration. He is in labours more abundant and in stripes above measure. He is in prisons more frequent and was often in deaths oft.

2 Corinthians 11:24

Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. He received from the Jews forty stripes save one five times. Why save one? Because of miscounting. So that it would not accidentally be 41. That is why they go only to 39. Justice must take its course. Forty stripes were it and more than forty may not be, and so for safety they do forty save one stripes. The things Paul lists here are historical. They took place in Paul's life. Most things, however, we cannot find back in the book of Acts. A large part of Paul's ministry is therefore not even described in the Bible. You can think that the Bible has not engaged in incomplete historiography, but historiography is always incomplete. Moreover, if we

had only the Bible, we would know absolutely nothing about all those other apostles, except a little about the apostle Peter. We only know that they were sent to all nations to make them disciples of Jesus, but whether they did so we do not read in the Bible. In world history you do encounter them all and they are mentioned. So we can know what they did and how they fared.

As far as Paul is concerned, his history is broken off at the end of Acts 28. It is not finished. And of what he did we know only a part, for much of what he lists here we cannot find in Acts, while it must have been in that time period. After that we still have Paul's journeys after his imprisonment in Rome. If at the end of Acts it says that Paul remained two years in his own hired house, then that must have been written in the time after those two years had passed. If he had died then, Luke would undoubtedly have added that, but since it is not there, it seems more likely that he was released after those two years. That is indeed what happened. General or church history testifies to that. In other words, we do not know much and you should also conclude that from these verses.

The purpose of the book of Acts is not to give an account of the acts of the apostles. That is why it is sometimes suggested to give that book another name, for example "Acts of the Holy Spirit". In Acts it is much more about the manner of acting, how the Gospel was preached in practice and what the consequences were; the difficulties encountered in it and how one dealt with them. You do not need all the apostles for that. The history in Acts is, like the history in the four Gospels, highly charged with figurative meaning. That is to say, behind all those histories there is something else. That is already so in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospels and the book of Acts, that is also the case. It is therefore not a complete report of what happened.

2 Corinthians 11:25

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

He was beaten with rods three times and stoned once. You find that back in Acts. He suffered shipwreck three times. We read only about one time, through which he ended up on Malta. Through that the whole island was converted, under the leadership of the chief man of the island. Behind that lies the conversion of Britain, that island much further west, of which Isaiah spoke, where the whole island was converted under the leadership of the high king, the king of kings of the island.

He also spent a night and a day in the deep. That will not have been in the depth of the sea, but probably in the depth of a ravine.

2 Corinthians 11:26

In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;

In perils by mine own countrymen: the Jews had it in for him especially, because he was a Jewish apostate and therefore a threat to Judaism.

The false brethren: they are your brethren, but they are your enemies. If you preach more than what the church officially teaches or does in practice, then you become a threat to the church and your life is not safe. That is how it went, because the devil is

behind it. In Galatians 2:4 Paul speaks of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus. They want to take that liberty from us. So they want to make us subservient, strike us in the face, exalt themselves above us. That is what always happens to the free. They are overtaken by those who want to establish their power over the free. That is not only so in religious terms, in the world it happens too. In the Netherlands we say that we live in a free country, but that is not at all the case. It once was, but no longer now, let alone other countries.

2 Corinthians 11:27

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.

Labour is painfulness, for it is heavy work.

In watchings often = lying awake.

Fasting involves more than just not eating and drinking.

In cold and nakedness = having no shelter.

2 Corinthians 11:28

Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Besides the things that come upon him from outside, that are done to him from outside, the care of all the churches assails him daily.

That care for all the churches obviously does not come upon him from outside, but from within. He is caring and is aware of his responsibility. Of course we can ask whether the care he has for all the churches is justified or not. In Roman Catholic circles one would say that he does not need to take that care upon himself, for Peter is there for that. It has also been invented that if someone is placed in the service of the Lord, that then applies only to that one local congregation. Thus his responsibility is limited. You can give someone responsibility and appoint him, but you must also ensure that it does not get out of hand and so you had better limit that responsibility. Hence someone becomes a minister in a certain place. Outside that he must have nothing to say. By biblical standards that is not so. The Bible does indeed know local communities, as we do too, but the Church of Christ is but one. So if you receive a position in it from God, then that applies to the whole Church and is therefore not bound to a place. Hence the apostles travelled city and country and sea to serve with the Word of God. Hence Paul can calmly speak of the care of all the churches. Could he in practice care for all those churches? It is a responsibility of which he earlier wrote that he simply has it.

He has had to endure all those things. If it is then a merit that you let yourself be struck in the face, that you are humiliated and devoured, opposed or take a low position, then Paul is more than those others, for he has had to endure far more. The Corinthians will of course say that someone who has it so hard in life in his ministry can never be a servant of the Lord. Then the Lord would surely ensure that all these things did not happen to him.

It is always so easy to be negative about something. The Corinthians simply do not want him.

2 Corinthians 11:29

Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? Everyone is weak at some point. So is he. What is wrong with that? It happens to everyone, under certain circumstances. Weak, not in the sense of failing, but that there are circumstances you cannot cope with. You stumble and lie in a ravine. Such things can simply happen to you. The wind blows so hard that you cannot keep control of the ship. Then you are weak. Such things happen to us all in life. We want all sorts of things, but at a certain point it gets out of hand and then it goes wrong. Who is offended that I do not burn, that I am not offended and then get worked up (burn).

2 Corinthians 11:30

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. This is his lead-in. In the following verses he will mention yet another weakness. This is weakness. He does all sorts of things and everything goes wrong. Yet there is something else that also goes wrong. We are anticipating matters a little here, for in the next chapter Paul says that he knows a man in Christ (he is speaking of himself) who was caught up even to the third heaven, even to the paradise of God. He learned, saw, and heard all sorts of things there, but he was not able to pass them on, assuming that he would gladly have done so, but also that it was his commission. Yet he could not manage it. Why not? Because he could not cope with those Corinthians, those weak Corinthians. They simply did not want to hear. That is the connection in the story. That is the direction he is heading.

If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. But half a page further on it says: Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

He is really explaining here that our own natural strength can so stand in the way that the power of God cannot be manifested. We ourselves stand in the way. We trust in ourselves rather than in the Lord. We are busy ourselves and have our own plans and intentions, so that we leave no room for the Lord.

For example: the Lord told His disciples that they would be taken captive and dragged before rulers and kings, but He added that they should not be anxious about what they would say, for He would give them the words in their mouth. So if those people have thought out their defence in advance, written it down, and read it out on the occasion, then there is certainly no room for the Lord to put His words in their mouth. We then counter that the Lord could have guided and inspired them in their preparation. That means we just do our work and the Lord must see what He can do with it. You can reason everything away, but you should not do that; you should let the things stand as they are in the Bible.

Paul had no preconceived plan. Of course he had an idea of what he wanted, but he let it depend on the circumstances what he would actually do. That way the Lord at least still had the opportunity to say to him, so to speak, that he should not turn left here, but go straight on. For instance, he was in Troas and could go nowhere. Then he dreamed of a man who said to him that he should come over and help him. So his journey went differently from what he perhaps thought. It was improvised on the spot.

Paul therefore says that when he is weak, he is mighty in the Lord.

Paul's great argument here with the Corinthians is this: "You think I am weak? You are quite right. But how do you think your own church in Corinth came into being? Indeed, through my preaching; through the preaching of that weak man. I immediately admit that I am weak, and so it was not by my strength, but by the power of God." That is what it is about. In many cases one should say that God uses people despite who they are. That is not the whole truth, but to limit it to God using people because of who they are is certainly not right. In all cases it holds that God makes us into someone else. He gives us new life and makes us His children. So it is always despite who we are.

31 The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not;

32 In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me;

King Aretas was the king of Petra, a Nabataean. Damascus was at that time subject to the Nabataeans (Nabathians, from whom the Nabataeans descend, was the eldest son of Ishmael).

Desirous to apprehend me. That is described in Acts 9.33

And through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands. That does not exactly sound like a victory. It is rather a pitiful story. They had to lower him in a basket out of the window. He had to flee and not in an honourable way.

Nevertheless, he was persecuted by King Aretas and his local governor in Damascus. He was regarded as a great danger to the whole political world of that time.

Paul had already left Damascus once before. You have to lay Acts 9 and Galatians 1 side by side to see that. When he fled over the wall in a basket as described here, he then went to Tarsus. Before that, however, he had already come to conversion in Damascus and left Damascus, after which he went to Arabia (most likely to Sinai). There he experienced what is told in the verses that follow. He went there to see where Moses had got the law from. The law of which he apparently understood nothing. He saw a great deal there and would now like to tell those Corinthians about it. To some extent he did so, but in practice little came of it. He refers to that event in the next chapter, but then does not go into it further. If they do not want to know, then so be it. That is of course sad, both for the Corinthians and for Paul. He just goes on alone, in weakness and only for those who want to hear.

For those who have understood that it is not about our prosperity here in this world, about man in general and especially about the believing man in particular, but about the glory of Christ, who would be manifested in us. That we are drawn out of this world and placed in a heavenly position, from there to have part in the glory of Christ at His coming again and what follows. That requires a focus on unseen things. On things we cannot imagine, but which are revealed to us in the Word of God. The knowledge and awareness of that should lift us above earthly circumstances and also above this earthly division of "I am of this one and I of that one," and so on. We are children of God. Here on earth there may be all sorts of division, but we do not belong to it and do not take part in it.

- The Heavenly Vision and the Thorn in the Flesh

Although it may not be immediately obvious, Paul has here arrived at the core of his ministry, namely its content, although he approaches it from the negative side. Earlier

he spoke of his own foolishness, his folly, whereby on the one hand he accommodates the level on which the Corinthians reason and indeed live, but on the other hand he now takes the opportunity to say something very special after all. In chapter 11 we found a very long list of all sorts of adversities that Paul underwent. Things went heavily against him. That is also what the Corinthians hold against him. If things go so badly for him, then he must be an amateur, not a real apostle. If he were a real apostle, then the Lord would be with him and these things would not all have happened to him. They look far, but they do so in order not to have to listen to him, for that is what it came down to in practice.

That is also generally known with regard to these two epistles. The last thing he described is that he had to flee from Damascus on occasion. He was let down through a window in a basket over the wall and escaped the governor of King Aretas. That too was a rather inglorious affair. You wonder what King Aretas had to do with it. He was king of Petra, the capital of the Nabataeans. If you visit Petra, then even before you are actually in Petra you stand at his tomb monument: Aretas IV. He was not only king of Petra, but of a fairly large empire that extended at least from the northern part of Arabia to Damascus. Perhaps that is the connection with the following verses. For they are about a special event from Paul's life.

2 Corinthians 12:1 - 2

It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

If I then must glory in who I am and what my merits are, then that is of little use, but if in my folly I were to do it anyway, then I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.

Then he begins to speak about a man.

2 I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven;

In the following verses he repeats it once more.

In the following section it is again about the infirmities, in which the famous text stands, that God said to him: My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

It is generally known that although Paul speaks of a man, he is in reality speaking of himself. That is also evident from the further context. At any rate, he speaks distantly about himself. He distances himself from himself. In English that also happens. It is a form of modesty.

He is now not speaking about something negative, but precisely about something positive.

How could he not be an apostle? He was even caught up to the third heaven. Yes, he was caught up into paradise.

To the third heaven? Why not to the seventh heaven? And as for paradise, there are also very strange teachings about that.

He not only heard unspeakable words there, but moreover it is not lawful to utter them. Then people have problems with what stands in verse

2 Corinthians 12:7, namely about the sharp thorn in Paul's flesh. What was that? In short, people usually lose the thread here.

That is a pity, precisely because it is such a fundamental passage of Scripture, right at the end of both Corinthian epistles. In chapter 13 only the final exhortations follow. In fact, chapter 12 is therefore the end of the epistle and thus important enough. It is first of all about Paul himself, who was caught up to the third heaven. We know only three heavens. Only the Mohammedans have added four heavens and thus come to seven heavens. In the Bible you really find no more than three, namely two heavens and then the heaven of heavens. In the sense that the heaven of heavens is still higher in order than the other two heavens.

In the Bible heaven is often spoken of in the plural. It is often written in the dual form. The translators then have a problem, because in English we know no dual form, only singular and plural. If there is a dual form, is it then one thing (a pair together), or more than one? And so in Isaiah 65:17 you read of new heavens and a new earth, while in Genesis 1 you read that God created the heaven and the earth. This is only an example, but in both Scripture passages you really find the same expression: shamayim. The 'ayim' at the end means that it is about two, in the sense that they belong together. They form a pair. That is why we translate 'Ephraim' as 'double fruit'. Mitsrayim, on the other hand, we simply translate as 'Egypt'. It is actually two Egypts, namely Upper and Lower Egypt. Both parts were originally separate from each other, but later united by the marriage of the Lower Egyptian princess Neith-hotep and the Upper Egyptian field marshal king Narmer around 3100 BC.

If you only have the Hebrew consonantal script, you cannot even see the plural form, but in the Jewish tradition it stands that it must be read as plural. That is evident from the vowel points they later placed under it: two heavens.

We know two heavens, namely the heaven of the birds, in which the birds of heaven fly, and the other is above the atmosphere, which we call space. There are no more. The creation therefore consists of two heavens and one earth.

In addition there is indeed another heaven, the heaven of heavens, but that is also mentioned in the Bible: the heaven that is of old. This therefore does not form part of creation. That heaven is called: the fixed place of Thy dwelling (e.g. 2 Chronicles 6:21), or: the heaven is My throne (Isaiah 66:1). The Heaven, yes the heaven of heavens, that is the third heaven. It is even higher—but then in order—than the two heavens that we physically know and belong to creation. By biblical standards the heaven of heavens extends to the earth's surface. The Lord dwells in our hearts and is seated at the right hand of God in the highest heavens. That is not even a metre apart. That heaven does not form part of a tangible, physical, created world, but of the unseen world.

In that heaven Paul was caught up.

Furthermore it says that he was caught up into paradise. Some think that paradise is the name of a specific garden, namely that of Eden. That garden of Genesis, in and over which Adam was appointed to dress it and to keep it. That the garden of Eden is the paradise, however, is a misunderstanding, for the word 'paradise' simply means 'park'. It is no coincidence that the first letters correspond.

Paradise is used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, to designate the garden of Eden. Instead of garden you therefore read paradise there. But the Greek word paradise also comes from the Hebrew, which is older than all other languages. Paradeisos comes from the Hebrew pardes, which in the KJV is translated as garden. That word, however, does not occur in Genesis, where 'garden' is the translation of 'baggan'.

Pardes occurs in: Nehemiah 2:8; Ecclesiastes 2:5 and Song of Solomon 4:13. In the first two it is translated as lusthof (pleasure garden) and in the last as paradise. In Nehemiah 2:8 it is about the royal pleasure garden. Ordinary people generally did not maintain pleasure gardens; Solomon did. He laid out those gardens. Hence you also find that mentioned in Ecclesiastes 2:5. Solomon, the writer of Ecclesiastes, had botanical gardens and collected plants and animals from all over the world. Actually a pardes is a royal garden that belongs to the palace.

Pardes comes from parad = to separate, to set apart. Spread, in the sense of spreading out, outward. In English it would be: to separate. It is also in the word 'diaspora'. The letters have got a bit mixed up, but that is how language works, through anagrams, by letters changing position with each other.

We also know the word with a 't' at the end: parat. The Dutch word praat (talk) comes from that, in the sense of talking and chatter. That has the same meaning. Talking, chatter = scattering with words. Actually scattering rubbish. When someone uses words without content it is not called speaking, but talking. Actually wasting words, throwing them away, distancing oneself from them.

That concept is the designation of such a garden, because such a garden is distinguished from the rest of the world. A fence, a hedge or a gate is put around it. Thus it is separated from the rest of the world. That is why this word is used for it. Moreover, it distinguishes itself from the rest of the world because weeds flourish there, while the intention is that something other than weeds flourishes in the pleasure garden. Through Greek (paradeisos) and Latin (paradiso) the word has come into our English language. It is therefore simply the designation of a solemn garden. That is why it is used in the Septuagint to designate the garden of Eden, but that is also why Paul can use it for heaven itself, namely separated from the rest of the world. A clean, well-maintained place, where the throne of God stands.

The Lord Jesus says to the murderer next to Him on the cross: To day shalt thou be with me in paradise. That is not the garden of Eden, but also not heaven. In the Jewish tradition that expression is also used for what in the same tradition is also called the bosom of Abraham. The bosom of Abraham is mentioned in the parable of the rich man and poor Lazarus. He died and lifted up his eyes in hades, namely in Abraham's bosom. It is one of the designations there for the good side of hades. Hades is divided into two places, a good and a bad side, with a gulf in between. It is then said that this comes from the Jewish tradition and that is so, but the Lord Jesus quotes it and since then it stands in the Bible and thereby that Jewish tradition is recognised and therefore it is also a biblical principle that believers and unbelievers in hades are separated from each other and live in different kinds of circumstances. Because it is also a world in another dimension, nothing further can be said about it, because it escapes our comprehension. Nevertheless, the terms used for it are clear enough.

If something is thrown into your bosom, then it is your property. If you are thrown into Abraham's bosom, then you are Abraham's property. In other words, then you are an heir of Abraham. That is exactly what the Bible says: all believers are heirs of Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 29). That applies not only in the New Testament, but the Jewish teaching also says it that way. They say: "We are children of Abraham." The Lord Jesus then questions that, "for," He says, "if that were so, then you would believe as Abraham did" (see John 8). If in Old Testament times people believed and died, then they did go to hades, awaiting the Last Day, but they dwell there in reasonably good circumstances,

because they are united there with Abraham, the father of all believers. They are separated there and therefore it is called a paradise.

all believers. They were set apart there and therefore it is called a paradise.

Paradeisos is found in the New Testament in:

- Luke 23:43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. He died and therefore went to the realm of the dead. For believers that is the bosom of Abraham, or paradise.
- 2 Corinthians 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.
- Revelation 2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

If you read “paradise” as another word for park, then you have no trouble at all with this word.

Some read “paradise” in 2 Corinthians 12 as though it were the garden of Eden, for which there is no biblical basis whatsoever, and conclude that after Adam was driven out of the garden, paradise was transplanted and set in heaven. Thus people who go to heaven still end up in paradise. Why then did cherubim have to stand at the entrance of the garden to ensure that Adam did not go back into the garden? Paradise is therefore not a proper name, but a thing. There are multiple paradises, multiple set-apart gardens, which have been made into pleasure gardens. Our word “park” comes from *parades*.

2 Corinthians 12:3 -4

And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;)

4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul was therefore caught up even to heaven itself, which he calls a paradise for the occasion. A pleasure garden. You can well imagine that.

He heard unspeakable words there. Well, unspeakable? Words can always be spoken.

“Unspeakable” here means that it is not lawful for a man to utter those things, as it says afterwards.

That man is Paul. It was therefore not lawful for Paul to utter those words.

The question is who then forbade him to do so. That is important to know, because this is the crux of the whole story. On the basis of both epistles it is not difficult to see that it was the Corinthians themselves who did not permit him to utter those words.

In chapters 10 and 11 Paul spoke extensively about his frustrations. He was hindered, not taken seriously, opposed. He was not given the opportunity to say what he had to say. He even says that in these epistles. He simply must say those things. They have been committed to him. And if it does not go willingly, then it will go unwillingly.

Moreover, he receives wages for it. He will certainly do it. But unfortunately he is not given the chance by the Corinthians. They do not want to hear what he has to tell.

What does he have to tell then? The content of Paul’s message is directly related to what he saw there in paradise. Whether that was in the body or out of the body we do not know to this day. We do know something, however, about the circumstances. When and where he was caught up to heaven. We shall come to that shortly. First a little aside...In

some circles it is taught that Paul during a large part of the book of Acts was not aware of the true nature of God's plan. Or else, that God still changed His plan and made that known through Paul, so that suddenly the earlier epistles of Paul no longer have value, because they are no longer current. People then say that Paul's first epistles are about other things than the calling of the Church in this present time. If we can then show that they are nevertheless about the Church, they say it is about another Church. And if we say that those first epistles are also about a heavenly future of the Church, they say that is admittedly so, but that our future is a super-heavenly future. In this way the content of the whole Bible is gradually reasoned away. The Old Testament is also not about us, for therein church truth is hidden, by which is meant that it therefore does not appear there. In the days of the Lord Jesus, but also in the days of the apostles and of Paul, it was about a Jewish Gospel, specifically Jewish in character, in connection with the revelation of the Kingdom on earth. We in our days have nothing to do with that either. That is not our calling. How do we know anything about it then? Well, because Paul at a later age and thus somewhere far in his career was still given a revelation by God, through which suddenly everything proved to be different.

That, however, is completely impossible, for Paul wrote in his early epistle to the Galatians that if anyone comes with another gospel, he would be accursed. These people claim that Paul himself came with another gospel, from which you must therefore conclude that Paul is accursed.

But now concretely, when did Paul then receive this revelation, so that he suddenly learned something additional? When was he informed of the change in God's plans? The Jewish people were after all unbelieving and yes, then plan B comes into operation. When Paul received that revelation is simply in the Bible, but you must pay attention. You might look for it in the book of Acts, for there the history of Paul is described, but it is not there. People have indeed invented that somewhere in Acts it says that he was stoned once and nearly died. Then he had a near-death experience and as it were looked through the window into heaven. He was therefore actually already in heaven and saw things there. He was then revived or came back to consciousness. Perhaps the Lord sent him back or perhaps even raised him from the dead. That occasion would perhaps have taught him something. Others think that event was still too early, because Paul then still speaks about the Kingdom of God, up to Acts 28. People insist that the Kingdom of God has nothing to do with the Church and therefore church truth only comes after Acts 28. Then you are perhaps left with one or two epistles, assuming that the epistles Paul wrote in prison were not written in the prison in Rome, but still later. In this way you betray the pages of the Bible to maintain your own teaching. How it really happened, for that you only need to turn one page from 2 Corinthians 12, where Paul again speaks about himself, but now in his epistle to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:11

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

12 For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That means he did not receive the gospel from man and therefore does not parrot anyone. He was not taught it by men.

Galatians 1:12

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

That is to say, Jesus Christ revealed something to him. He does not say that it was something different, but that what he learned, he did not learn from men, but from the Lord Himself. And whether what he learned was something different from what the disciples, or the apostles, learned, he does not go into that. You should therefore not read that distinction into it either. He only says that the source of what he preaches does not lie with a previous generation, for example with those who were apostles before him (verse 17), but he received it from Jesus Christ. He is not talking about what he received, but about how he received it. Then he explains...

Galatians 1:13

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,

16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

The main clause is: But when it pleased God... to reveal his Son in me. In the subordinate clause it says that God had destined him for that from his mother's womb. This means that the Lord nevertheless let Paul live for at least some decades within Judaism. He first let him go his own way for a while and only called him later. Through that he at any rate learned where you end up if you live under the law. If you take that seriously, you become an enemy of God, an enemy of Christ, and an enemy of the Church of God. Then the Lord says: "Why persecutest thou me?" After that it made Paul immune and allergic to the law. He could no longer bear it when believers placed themselves under the law in any way. We owe this epistle to the Galatians among others to that, but also the epistle to the Hebrews. If you live under the law, the Lord quietly lets you walk on the wrong path. You must see what comes of it then.

Ultimately Paul was seized by God, but he was certainly no longer as young as many think. Probably already about forty years old. That happened on the way to Damascus, when under the authority of the high priest in Jerusalem he went to persecute the Christians in Damascus. The Lord then seized him on the way and said: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Then Saul said: "Who art thou, Lord?" From that moment he was blind. On closer inspection he had always been that. The Lord then sent him to Damascus anyway and prepared his coming there. Ananias came to him there and laid hands on him, after which he became seeing again. Thus Paul suddenly arrived as a Christian in Damascus, without having understood anything of doctrinal truth concerning the Church. That is to say, Paul was a learned man, but on closer inspection he actually knew nothing.

And then? He did not confer with flesh and blood, but...

Galatians 1:16

To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

17 Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.

To confer = to take counsel = to seek legal advice. In this case scriptural advice. He had to learn how it was with the Word of God, with the Torah, the law, and so on. How did that work? It would have been obvious if he had now gone back to Jerusalem, to those who were apostles before him, to let himself be taught by them after all. He did not do that, because he was probably quite well acquainted with the Christian teachings. That was after all the reason he persecuted them. They had apparently not been able to convince him enough. That still happens in our days. There are people who pass for Bible scholars, but you cannot convince them of any biblical truth whatsoever. They generally have a doubtful Christian faith. What they would perhaps have to learn and understand does not fit into their system, into their tradition. What is called orthodox, also in the Netherlands, is in reality not faithful to the doctrine, but to the tradition, faithful to the way of life, the outside. For law is about that, about the outside, about flesh, about behaviour. The Bible, however, says that the law leaves the heart unfruitful and empty. The Israelites served God with their lips, but their heart they kept far from Him.

Paul therefore did not confer with flesh and blood, nor with those who were apostles before him. Nor with his teacher Gamaliel, by whom he had been taught, but through that had become a fanatical orthodox Jew. Where should you go then? To the Lord. Then you ask Him the most fundamental question, namely: “Who art thou, Lord?”

How it happened we do not know; whether Paul himself thought of it, or whether the Lord sent him, but he then went to Arabia. Fourteen years later the Lord sent him to Jerusalem. He would not have thought of it himself, but he went by revelation (Galatians 2:1–2). Then he gave an account there in Jerusalem of his ministry and his first missionary journey, as described in Acts 15.

Paul immediately did not confer with flesh and blood, but he went to Arabia. What did he go there to do? He went there to confer, to seek advice. Who is there in Arabia to teach him? We do not know who or what is in Arabia, except a mountain. If we turn another page we come to that mountain, namely Sinai.

A comparison between Paul’s visit to Arabia (as described in Galatians 1:15–17) and the experience he recounts in 2 Corinthians 12:2–4 (being caught up to the third heaven / paradise), based on your notes and the biblical text. Both events are deeply formative for Paul’s ministry, but they differ in timing, purpose, nature, and outcome.

1. Timing & Chronology

- Arabia visit (Galatians 1)

Immediately after his conversion on the road to Damascus (around AD 33–34).

He states: “immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem... but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”

This was early in his Christian life — before any public apostolic ministry, before meeting the other apostles, and before his first missionary journey (which began years later, around AD 46–48).

- Caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12)

Paul says it happened “above fourteen years ago” (from the writing of 2 Corinthians, ca. AD 55–56).

This places the event around AD 41–42 — still relatively early, but after his time in

Arabia, after his return to Damascus and Tarsus, and after Barnabas brought him to Antioch (ca. AD 43).

→ Conclusion: The Arabia visit came first (immediately post-conversion); the rapture-like experience came later (roughly 7–9 years afterward).

2. Location & Setting

- Arabia

Explicitly a geographical region — most likely Mount Sinai in Arabia (Galatians 4:25: “Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia”).

Paul deliberately went to the very mountain where Moses received the law / Old Covenant.

This was a physical, earthly journey to a historically sacred (Old Testament) site.

- Third heaven / paradise

Not a geographical place on earth.

Paul is unsure whether it was “in the body” or “out of the body” — God knows (v. 2–3).

He calls it both “the third heaven” and “paradise.”

→ The third heaven is the heaven of heavens (beyond the visible sky and the starry heaven) — the unseen, spiritual dwelling place of God.

→ Paradise = a set-apart, royal pleasure garden (pardes), symbolizing the presence of God, separated from the profane world.

This was a supernatural, visionary translation — whether bodily or spiritual — into the immediate presence of God.

3. Purpose & What Happened

- Arabia (Sinai)

Paul went there to confer / seek counsel — not with men, not with the Jerusalem apostles, but presumably with God at the source of the law.

He was re-examining / re-learning the Old Testament Scriptures in light of his encounter with the risen Christ.

Likely he saw / understood the same things Moses saw on Sinai — New Covenant / church truth hidden in Old Testament patterns (tabernacle, priesthood, ordinances as “example and shadow of heavenly things” — Hebrews 8:5).

He returned knowing how the law relates to grace, how the Old Covenant shadows the New, and how church truth is already present (hidden) in the Old Testament.

- Third heaven / paradise

He was caught up (passive — God did it) and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter (v. 4).

He did not go there to learn or confer — he was taken there.

The content was so exalted / sacred that he was forbidden (or unable) to repeat it publicly.

→ This was not primarily for acquiring new doctrine (he already had that from Arabia / Scripture), but likely a confirming, overwhelming revelation of the glory and reality of the heavenly position he was called to proclaim.

4. Outcome & Effect on Ministry

- Arabia

Result: Paul emerged with deep doctrinal clarity about law vs. grace, Old vs. New

Covenant, and the mystery of Christ in the Gentiles / Church hidden in the Old Testament.

This became the foundation of his entire teaching (seen in Galatians, Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews).

He did not immediately begin public ministry — he returned to Damascus, then lived quietly in Tarsus for several years.

- Third heaven / paradise

Result: A confirming revelation of heavenly glory — but also a thorn in the flesh (messenger of Satan) to keep him humble, “lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations” (v. 7).

He learned: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (v. 9).

→ He gloried in infirmities, so that the power of Christ might rest upon him (v. 9).

→ When he is weak, then he is strong (v. 10).

This experience reinforced humility and dependence — the very opposite of self-exaltation.

Summary Comparison Table

Aspect	Arabia Visit (Gal 1:15–17)	Caught up to Third Heaven (2 Cor 12:2–10)
Timing	Immediately after conversion (~AD 33–34)	14 years before 2 Cor (AD 41–42)
Nature	Physical journey to Mount Sinai (earthly)	Supernatural catching up (in/out of body?)
Purpose	To confer / re-study Scripture at the law's source	To behold heavenly glory / receive confirming vision
What he received	Insight into Old → New Covenant patterns	Heard unspeakable words (not lawful to utter)
Outcome for Paul	Doctrinal clarity → foundation for his teaching	Humility via thorn in flesh → grace perfected in weakness
Relation to ministry	Prepared him theologically (law/grace, mystery)	Kept him humble amid abundant revelations
Public sharing	Basis for all his letters (openly taught)	Not permitted / not possible to utter

One-sentence summary (your style) Paul went to Arabia (Sinai) immediately after conversion to receive foundational insight into the hidden New Covenant truth in the Old Testament Scriptures; years later he was caught up to the third heaven / paradise to behold overwhelming glory — but was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble, so that he learned to glory only in weakness and to rely on Christ's power made perfect in that weakness — the very lesson the carnal, self-exalting Corinthians most needed but resisted.

Galatians 4:22

For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.

25 For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.

Hagar and Sinai, but also the son born of her, Ishmael, are all a picture of the Old Covenant, while on the other hand Sarah and the son born of her, Isaac, are the picture of the New Covenant, under which we live.

Sinai is therefore a mountain in Arabia. Sinai is the mountain of the giving of the law. You do not need to explain that to a Jew. That it says the mountain is in Arabia has doctrinally no significance at all and yet it is there. You now also immediately have all the Scripture passages in the New Testament where Arabia is mentioned. The only thing said about it is that Mount Sinai is there. If Paul therefore went to Arabia, then the chance is great that he travelled to Sinai and climbed that mountain there. On the map that mountain is called "Jabal al-Lawz," locally known as Jabal Musa, the mountain of Moses. That mountain lies in Midian, the northern part of Arabia.

What did Paul go there to do? He had not understood something. The whole nature of the law, of the Old Covenant, under which he lived, he had not understood. He had to go back to the beginning. He went back to the source, to Sinai, where the law had its origin. In that time Moses climbed that mountain with the elders of Israel, until they came into the clouds. There the elders of Israel stayed behind, while Moses himself disappeared into those clouds. What happened there and whether it was in the body or out of the body, we do not know, God knows. At any rate, things were shown to Moses there. In Hebrews 8 we read in connection with the Old Testament practice, with the Old Testament form of service, that Moses was responsible for the forms of the life and service under the law. That is by definition form of service, for actually the whole life is form-giving. Then it says...

Hebrews 8:5 ...

See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

He saw New Testament truth there on that mountain and more particularly church truth. How you can see that we naturally do not know. That is why we also do not know whether it was in the body or out of the body. Nevertheless, he saw it. He gained insight into New Testament truth. God made that known to him. Apparently it was really forbidden to Moses to utter those things.

At that time it was still so: The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever (Deuteronomy 29:29). These secret things received artistic form. Pictorial art therefore. Those abstract spiritual truths received form in shapes. That is what Moses had to do: "See that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount."

The service under the Old Covenant took place mainly around the tabernacle, about which the Bible tells us nothing. At least not about the meaning of it, though books have been written full of it.

Well, in Hebrews 9 a very little is written about it.

There it says that under the Old Covenant you also had a sanctuary and ordinances. There were two tabernacles, called the holy and the most holy. In the first tabernacle service was done every day non-stop at the table of shewbread and at the golden candlestick. Behind the veil was the second tabernacle, called the most holy. There no service was done, except on the Day of Atonement, for then the high priest went in once a year, not without blood, into that sanctuary, to make atonement for the sins of the people. When that happened no one might be present in the holy place. Whereby the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest,

while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. The thrust of that is that as long as you serve under the Old Covenant, the New Covenant remains closed. Then that does not break through. The point of it is that if you want to live under the law, you can, but then the veil remains closed. Then you are stuck with the Old Covenant, but you do not know the blessings of the New Covenant. Then you have not seen the ark of the covenant either, the mercy seat, on which Christ is seated in glory, where He makes atonement for our sins. Then you have nothing of that, for you live in the holy place. Is it holy? Yes, it is holy. Yet there must be an end to it, before the veil is rent. Only then do you come into the holiest of all and thus into heaven itself. That is all in Hebrews 9.

The tabernacle and its ordinances are expressions of spiritual truths. Not much more is written about it. Paul says in the same chapter: "Of which we cannot now speak particularly." He does not tell what the menorah represents, or the table of shewbread. He does say that those things have a signification, a spiritual meaning.

We first see those objects and wonder what they are a picture of, but historically it is the other way round. Moses saw the essential things. After that the law gives expression to that in form of service. That is why it is tragic that most Christians, but Jews too, do not know or no longer know the meaning of it. Why, for example, is there circumcision among the Jews? Because Abraham did it too, is then the answer. But why then? People often do not know that, though the answer to the question was already in the Old Testament. It is namely a picture of the circumcision of the heart, whereby as it were the outward man is taken away, cut off and no longer dominant and whereby the glory is revealed. One could know that, but does not know it and acts simply out of tradition. Paul therefore went back to the source to find out for himself. Perhaps God also told him to go to that mountain and that He would speak to him there. He then went to that mountain and it began to thunder, but the Lord was not in the thunder. Oh no, that was with Elijah. He was also sent to Mount Sinai in his days. That event also concerned a period of forty days, just like with Moses. Elijah sat on that mountain waiting and when it was dead still, suddenly there was the Lord. He then received the commission to anoint a king over Syria and one over the ten tribes of Israel. Moreover, he had to anoint Elisha to be prophet (1 Kings 19:1–18). Later, in the New Testament, the Lord Jesus is on a mountain, the mount of transfiguration. Who were there with Him? Curiously enough Moses and Elijah. That was probably not on Mount Sinai, but the Lord Himself was also once on a mountain, also for a period of forty days in which He ate nothing. He was tempted there and saw all sorts of visions. It is not stated, but why should that not have been on Mount Sinai. Both Moses and Elijah will still play a role in the future as the two witnesses in Jerusalem, in the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel. So why not? As far as distance is concerned it is not so far now either.

Paul went straight from Damascus to Arabia and from Arabia he went back to Damascus (see Galatians 1:17). That was all before he began his ministry as apostle. In Acts 9 we follow the story and then it appears that he went from Damascus to Tarsus, where his family came from. Only years later was he fetched from Tarsus by a certain Joseph, whom we know as Barnabas. He took Paul to Antioch and from there they went together on what we know as Paul's first missionary journey. In other words, Paul was called on the way to Damascus; after that he went to seek his light in Arabia, probably on Sinai, where he saw things that Moses also saw. From there he went back to Damascus and from Damascus home. There he then went to study his Bible again.

When Paul asserts something in his epistles, he never cries: "The Lord Himself told me that..." He says once that he also himself received what he delivered to you, but that was about the tradition of the Lord's Supper. Paul knew that tradition too. When it is about doctrinal truth, however, he never says that we cannot know that, because it is nowhere to be found and he will therefore tell us, because the Lord told him. That is nowhere. The Lord showed him one thing and another, but it was not the intention that Paul should proclaim what he saw, any more than Moses should do so. The intention was that in the light of what he saw he should still study his Bible, the Old Testament. That he did so seems clear enough. Whatever Paul teaches us of church truth, he always does so on the basis of Old Testament statements. Often also with reference to those Old Testament statements, such as: "As it is written..." or "As it was said by..." and so on. God gave gifts to the Church, such as..., for it is written in:

Psalm 68:

"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

In short, it is all in the Old Testament. The question is only: How? That is what it is about. Paul says on other occasions that church truth is hidden in the Old Testament, perhaps also written down, in the sense that it is available to everyone, but not revealed. That is to say, it is there, but in such a way that it cannot be understood. For example, the disciples ask the Lord Jesus why He speaks to them in parables, for they do not understand that. The Lord Jesus then said that that was also the intention, but He had now said it. Then you read: This understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was risen from the dead, then remembered they that he had said this unto them (John 12:16). Or: They remembered his words (Luke 24:8). Only later did they understand. Mary wondered at what He had spoken and kept the words in her heart. She admittedly did not understand the words, but she remembered them.

If you read that Paul was caught up to the third heaven and there heard unspeakable words, we wonder when that was. We do not know that, and then keep those words in our heart. If we turn the page and come to Galatians 1, we read that he conferred not with flesh and blood, but went into Arabia. Arabia? Why Arabia? No idea. Turn another page: Sinai, a mountain in Arabia. He evidently knew all about that, for he had been there. It is comparing Scripture with Scripture. Then you read about the history of Abraham with his two sons and understand how that works. In that, the two lines of God's plan of salvation were already portrayed. There runs a line through the dispensation, the stewardship, of the law, but that is a dead-end line, for it does not lead to salvation. That line leads only to hardening and unbelief, because the law is laid upon the outward part of man, upon the flesh. It is therefore unprofitable and useless. Besides that, there is another line, not that of the law (portrayed in Hagar, the bondwoman, and Ishmael, the bondman), but of the New Covenant of grace. That came later, just like Isaac, the younger of Abraham's two sons. That line runs through Sarah and Isaac and what came forth from him.

On another occasion, Paul says that you can indeed be Abraham's seed, but that it is not a matter of descent, but of promises that God has made, which you partake of through faith, for faith is counted for righteousness. Paul thus explains these things not only by means of Old Testament statements, but even by means of Old Testament symbolism. And if there is one way in which the truth of the Church is hidden in the Old Testament, it is precisely and especially and in the first place in the symbolism. Not only

in objects, such as the tabernacle, in tangible things, but entire histories express that. It repeats itself and repeats itself. The whole Old Testament is full of it. If you know that it works like that, then it becomes exactly the opposite of what it was. Then it is no longer a concealment, but suddenly becomes a revelation.

The whole story of the two covenants set against each other can be strikingly explained by means of Ishmael and Isaac. After that, a generation further, by means of Esau and Jacob. They are depictions of an entire plan of salvation. What is wrong with that? In symbolism, you need to be instructed. If, for example, you see a painting of a man walking beside his donkey, and on that donkey lies a person, as if dead, what does that portray? You do not know that just like that. It is not written on it either. But if you know the story from the Bible, then it suddenly begins to speak. Then you understand that this is the portrayal of the merciful Samaritan. That is Christ Himself. The one lying on the donkey is a portrayal of yourself, of man in general. He lies on His own beast, for so it is recorded in Luke. You can figure out the rest yourself. A corner of the veil is lifted, and then you suddenly see the meaning of those things.

That is what happened to Paul and also to Moses. With him, it was even more difficult. He had seen it directly and had to cover it afterwards. He had to build the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant, the most holy object, but it had to be covered, behind a veil. During transport, the veil had to be laid backwards on the ark. They were not allowed to see the ark of the covenant. Everything had to be covered. Over the tabernacle itself, three or four coverings were laid, of which the outermost was simply a colourless animal skin. On the outside, no glory was to be seen. The high priest did indeed go once a year into the holy of holies, but the common people remained outside. They are all coverings, and the New Testament says that too. It is the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God; it is the shadow of good things to come. In those shadows, however, you do see the outlines of New Testament truth. That truth is abstract in itself, but there are enough pictures of it. The Bible is full of them. Paul learned how that works, how you find the truth of the Church, the Messianic truth, in the Old Testament. That is not just the loose teaching that the Lord Jesus suffered and died for our sins and if you believe in Him you go to heaven, but how that fits together. Outsiders laugh at this: 'Died for my sins... Yes, sure, then you go to heaven. Ridiculous.' But in the Bible, there is a doctrinal foundation for these truths. Adam was already a figure of him that was to come. The woman taken out of him is an image of the Church. And so on. At a certain point, you begin to understand those things, and thus you gain doctrinal insight. That is the structure on which our salvation is based, on this eternal abiding Word of God. And if there was anyone who knew how it worked, it was Paul, because he indeed knew the scholarly foundation of it. He did have to start studying his Bible all over again in the light of what the Lord had shown him. So he says that he received it not of man, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. When he explains it to us, he leafs through the Bible with us and says, for example, that Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia. They are an allegory of the Old Covenant, which gendereth to bondage. These things did not go down with the Corinthians, carnal as they were and focused on the outward. They were not open to it. They were not interested in it, and therefore they wanted nothing to do with Paul. Perhaps they found it too high-flown for themselves. Maybe that is not the right term. Someone has to tell you those things and remove the veil. Someone has to explain once that the Man beside the donkey is the Lord Jesus, or that parakeets are an image of a faithful Bible translation, at least within the context in

which they are depicted, to name but one example. Reading paintings and old art, especially that in churches, or stained-glass windows, is often not so simple. You have to see the details and know what they represent.

In the Old Testament, you find Bezaleel and Aholiab. They were taught by the Spirit of God, not in a craft, but how to give form to spiritual things. That is art. It was not just about casting objects, forging metals, or embroidering a veil, but how you give shape to things. Thus truth takes form. Those forms have been communicated to us in the Bible. Even the literary forms, the linguistic constructions in the Bible, often have a meaning in themselves. It is sometimes difficult, but they are things you have to learn. You have to learn to understand right through the histories, right through what is mentioned on the surface, down to the details, that those things are a portrayal of spiritual truth.

That someone like Paul spent about forty years in Judaism and then was forcibly pulled out by the Lord is in itself a portrayal of the history of Israel. First a long time under the law, and then grace breaks in, with a jerk, with a bang. After that, the blindness has to be healed, which happens under the New Covenant.

That you find a specific mention of our dispensation in Ephesians in a parenthesis (an insertion) is because our dispensation itself is a parenthesis, as it were an interposed period. Ephesians 3 is as it were an interposed chapter. That is not for nothing. Those are forms, and you have to learn them. As a child of God, you have to learn, even with your Bible closed, to see right through circumstances in life to Jesus crowned with glory and honour, to the One who has gone before us, on whom we set our trust and consider not the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen. You do the same when reading the Bible. You do see the things that are there, you read the histories, but you understand that there is something behind them. Something that is not explicitly told, but to which it does indeed give expression or of which it is the expression. That is why there are such strange stories in the Bible. Historically, they are of no importance at all, but they are indeed important, because they have a prophetic meaning. Paul understood that, and it lies at the basis of all Bible knowledge. If you want to know the Bible, especially where it concerns this present dispensation of the mystery, you cannot avoid this. You have to learn to see behind those histories, behind the images, behind the often strange words that you read in the Old Testament.

The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it hath lighted upon Israel (Isa. 9:8). That sounds like nonsense, but it is not. Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear (Isa. 54:1). What on earth is that about? Those are images. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. How so? What does that mean? Yet it is a very fundamental truth. In Revelation 11, the temple is measured, but not the outer court. Then you wonder what all that means. Then you have to know what a temple is a portrayal of and why something is measured and why something is not measured.

You must know it, for they are illustrations of thoroughly Biblical truth. That truth remains hidden in this way for the world, but is revealed to us, children of God. The whole truth, into which Christ Himself would guide us. To that end, the Lord called Paul, but he could not get through to the Corinthians. The question is, of course, whether he can get through to us. Do we let ourselves be guided into all truth? Do we want to see things that we have never seen ourselves, but which are now shown to us? Thus we learn to understand the whole truth. Afterwards, we read the Bible again and understand that Genesis 1 already speaks of the glorified Christ. In verse 3 already! The Bible says that this is so: Let there be light: and there was light, and God hath shined in

our hearts (2 Cor. 4:6). So he applies the same words in connection with the creation of this world to the resurrection of Christ and our regeneration and our introduction into the truth, whereby He shines with His light in our hearts, that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly.

If you learn to understand those things, then you can indeed agree with Peter, who says that we have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed (2 Pet. 1:19).

Unfortunately, there are but few who can testify thus about their Bible from experience. You can of course repeat such things, but the point is that you experience it yourself. We read the Bible and understand that it is very sure, because it all interlocks and that the Bible is not just a collection of books, but the whole Scripture and the Word of God as one whole. That will never become so if you do not learn that all those outward things, also in the Bible, are the expression of inward, spiritual matters. Those are very difficult to formulate, but are sometimes painted before our eyes with a few brushstrokes, as Galatians 3:1 expresses it: before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth. That is what it is about, to learn to know Him. For that, we can go to Paul and through Paul to the whole Scripture.

Paul had heard unspeakable things, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. If this had not been there, then in general people would not have had so much difficulty with this passage of Scripture. Apart from this passage of Scripture, Paul says that he was taught by the Lord Himself and that he went and preached by the revelation of Jesus Christ. He was called by God and calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. He thus sent him out to preach. He became a minister of the Church, which is the body of Christ.

Col. 1:25

Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

26 Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints:

27 To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

29 Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Minister = deacon. Not slave, then.

He became a minister of the Church to fulfil the word of God. To make the Word of God full. Was the Word of God not yet full then? Had everything of God's Word not yet been written? Evidently not. As far as we know, Paul did not put the final touch to that either. There were writers later than he. If that were the meaning, then it could also have been the ministry of the other apostles. That could be, for it does not say that it is not so. It concerns the Word of God that already existed and was also written, of which indeed the full meaning was not known. There were quite a few passages of Scripture that were rather empty, because they were incomprehensible. In that sense, the Word of God still had to be fulfilled. The Word of God is there, but it is not yet full.

'What I have spoken, write it in a book and seal the book and cast it here into the water.'

Or think of the book of Daniel. About that, Paul still has quite a bit to say, both in the letters to the Thessalonians and to the Hebrews. Daniel had to shut up the book and it

would be shut until the time of the end. That began 2000 years ago with the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we have been living in the end time for 2000 years. The ages to come also began then, for that is the same. The present age has not yet ended, but the one to come has already begun. So those Scriptures have no longer been sealed for so long. Not only since today, so that now some new-fangled person can say that he knows it, because the Lord has explained it to him by means of a revelation. Since the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God is being fulfilled. Since that time, we are at least being illustrated how it is with the Word of God and how it is made full; how it is with those passages of Scripture in the Old Testament, of which within the framework of the Old Testament the meaning is completely unclear. In New Testament time, Paul, through what he had seen and received in teaching, was able to explain what is in the Old Testament: 'The meaning is this, because...!'

Many say: 'But I do not read that in those words of the Old Testament.' Yet the New Testament says that it means that. Prof. Runia of the Theological University in Kampen said that it was utterly impossible that David, when writing Psalm 8, thought of the Messiah when he wrote: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour. It is unthinkable that David, when he wrote this, thought of the Messiah. But why is that unthinkable? Hebrews 2 says that it is so. See also, for example, Psalm 16, quoted by Peter in Acts 2. There is even discussion about whether Peter should be considered capable of writing the two letters that are in the Bible under his name himself, because they go far beyond the level of a simple fisherman. Peter said on the day of Pentecost that David did write that God would not leave his soul in hell, neither would he suffer his Holy One to see corruption, but that this could not possibly apply to David himself, for he both died and was buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. He says that David was a prophet and knew what God had promised him, namely a Son who would come forth from his body, who would have an unshakeable throne. Thus, foreseeing this, he wrote about that Son whom he would have. David knew that, but Prof. Runia says that this is unthinkable. Well...Or people say that the writer of Hebrews (they do not want to admit that this was Paul) gave this application to it. It is then indeed inspired, but we theologians have the right to give any passage of Scripture a meaning of our own, depending on whether it suits us or not. They take a text and do with it as they please. The sad thing is that the average Christian takes this kind of theologian seriously.

This passage of Scripture, here in 2 Corinthians 12, is also such a difficult portion. You find no commentary that comes close to what is really there. Usually, people are completely lost, because in reality they do not know the situation that Paul describes. Namely, the frustration that you have a Biblical message which believers do not want. They assume that you should not tell people something they do not want. You are hired to meet a need that is often artificially created. People are religious and therefore must go to church at least once a week. At least, that is what is left of it. They must hear something too, but Biblical truth... they do not want that. The whole rest of the week, those people occupy themselves with their own practical life, with their ups and downs, with their emotions, with their damaged egos, or the poverty in which they live, or the lack of wealth, their illnesses, and so on. So what are you going to tell those people? That tomorrow it may be better, that the Lord tries you, but tomorrow He will reward you

for it after all, or the day after, or in eternity. Thus we keep up our spirits. In the end, we are going to win. And if you are ill... in that case, you can hold healing services. The Lord evidently serves to bring about healing. Everyone gets ill sooner or later. So you can play on that. But telling serious things about God's plan through the ages and the Lord's special purpose with the Church, that is impossible. In the first place because people do not want it, and in the second place they cannot want it, because they do not know what the Church is for a 'thing'. You can tell what God is doing in this time, but then you first have to explain what this time is and why this time is different from the preceding and following times.

The prophetic Word has no entry at all. People only want to know when the world will end, or when Christ will return, or when the rapture of the Church will take place, if they have ever heard of it. But explaining these things by means of Scripture, hardly anyone is interested in that. That is not about them, but about what the Lord is doing. People are not interested in that, and so you must not tell it, for that will empty the church, and that cannot be. Therefore, people have no idea what this passage of Scripture is about either.

For example, people say that Paul saw something in heaven like John in Revelation 4 and 5, or like Isaiah in Isaiah 6. He beheld the grandeur of heaven and creation and saw the throne of God in heaven, the cherubim and the seraphim, the angels and the archangels. Those are of course all things that you cannot utter. Even if it were allowed, it would still be impossible to formulate it. Moreover, he was not allowed to utter them, because the Lord forbade him. That is how people read it then. But then you are really completely lost. Cherubim and seraphim are words and images borrowed from visions, which give a symbolic representation of things for a man who is not at all able to perceive heavenly things. But that is not what it is about.

In Hebrews 8 it says that the Lord said to Moses on the mount: See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. We do not know what he saw, but the intention was that what he had seen in at least doctrinal truth, he would reproduce in visible and tangible images. We know that this is so, because we know that the tabernacle and also the temple service with all their forms and attributes in some way give expression to New Testament truth. It is thus a kind of pictorial art. The intention of rituals is that they give expression to and are images of intangible, invisible, and abstract things. That is also the essence of art, quite apart from the fact that according to the Bible all forms in this visible world are anyway images of the work of God. Hence orthodox Protestants used to say that there are two things through which God reveals Himself, namely through Scripture and through creation. That is also correct. How that is with creation is a bit unclear, for you did not get much more about it than that it was beautiful and artfully put together and quite large, so that God is evidently quite artful and quite large. Even in a simple hymn like 'How Great Thou Art' it says: when I see the worlds which Thou hast made (that is the original text). That is of course not right, for there is only one world. When I hear the rolling of the thunder, how great is God then? If you read God's greatness from that, then you have little idea of how great God really is.

In any case, Paul's frustration was that from God's side he had seen on one occasion what Moses had seen, and that must have been sufficient to give him insight into the structure of God's entire plan of salvation and in particular the relationship between the Old and New Covenant. How the Old Covenant is not the fulfilment of the promises to

Abraham (Gal. 3 and 4), but how on the other hand it is indeed the shadow of good things to come and the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God (Heb. 8:5; 10:1; 7:19). In short, a shadowing forth of better things in the future; a mirror as it were. If you know that, then you can suddenly go a long way further with the Old Testament. Then you suddenly understand all sorts of things.

Paul could do that, and that was at the same time his problem.

He had something to teach the Corinthians, but they had no interest in it. They engaged in party spirit. That is a word at least 100 years old: group formation; who belonged to whom? Later, that was called 'pillarisation' in the Netherlands. The Corinthians had no interest in spiritual things. They were carnal and interested in earthly things and divided each other into groups. That is very normal in the world. There you are classified into categories. Not only because of your way of thinking, but also, for example, according to what car you drive. People need overview and clarity, and then everything must be manipulable. If they need you from above, they must know exactly in which box you are and whether you are useful for something or not. That is how it has been in human history. At a certain point, people are completely fed up with that and a great uprising comes. Then all walls and sacred cows are broken down and the story starts all over again. We are busy with that in Europe now too. When it happens, it will happen under the leadership of the antichrist.

Paul was to fulfil the Word of God, but he does not get the opportunity. He does not get the opportunity to do what he did, for example, with the Ephesians, by saying that in Psalm 68:18 it says: Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them. You understand nothing of that. Yes, if they were understandable words, you would remember them, but they are not understandable words.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them! You have no idea what it is about. Who actually ascended on high? That can be only One. There would be someone who would ascend on high. Who could that be, if not Elijah and not Enoch? The Messiah, then. In John 3:13 we read: And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. The theologians stubbornly think that they are words of the Lord Jesus, and then it suddenly becomes mystical. Then it is about someone who is in heaven and at the same time here and there. And here and there He is apparently both God and man. That is mystical and no one can ever understand that. That is the doctrine of the Trinity, and thus you lose the whole story. That is science, theology. However, they are words of John. No man hath ascended up to heaven, but the Son of man, who is now in heaven. Oh yes? Yes, for as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. The brazen serpent that Moses had to make in the wilderness is thus an image of the Son of man. You might not have thought of that in the Old Testament, but here it is plainly stated. In orthodox evangelical circles, however, the Son of man is lifted up on the cross. Then you lose the story again. How high is a cross? How high was the Son of man lifted up then? That is not what it is about. It is about the exaltation of the Lord Jesus in heaven. Just read John 3. Afterwards we learn that this is simply in Psalm 68.

Moreover, it is written concerning the exaltation of the Lord Jesus in Psalm 110: The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy

footstool. In Hebrews it is stated that this is a prophecy concerning the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, even into heaven itself. For some reason it seems evidently difficult to see that.

The question then arises as to how it can be that these things are so hard to perceive. The problem is that those who occupy themselves with such matters are always caught up in practical work. They must serve as pastors, carry out social work, provide the people with two sermons on a Sunday—sermons in which there is not too much of what people do not want to hear, and so forth. The study of the Bible is thus automatically directed towards preparing a sermon for Sunday. One therefore does not read without prejudice. One has personal interests, a double agenda. Even when one is well-intentioned, one no longer gets anywhere with it, because it is no longer truly sincere and certainly not objective.

Nowadays hardly anyone believes any longer that one can read the Bible objectively. There is general agreement on that. History has demonstrated as much. Yet it is perfectly possible. If one does so, one naturally comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and learns many things along the way. One learns along the way that all those passages of Scripture one does not understand concern the Messiah.

In Ephesians 4 we learn, drawing from Psalm 68, that God gave gifts unto men: some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. For Psalm 68 says that He gave gifts unto men. To whom then did He give those gifts? To those captives (for that is what they already were), whom He afterwards led captive. He led captivity captive. That concerns the Church. He gave gifts unto them. In short, Psalm 68:18 is about God giving this kind of gifts to the Church. You do not read that in Psalm 68, but the Bible says that that is what it means. In other words, that passage of Scripture was not yet fulfilled, but afterwards we are told what it truly means.

Peter says concerning this: We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. In other words, one prophecy explains another, and another supplements the first, and so on. When one does this, people say that one must not simply draw conclusions: "It is not written there, and therefore it is a conclusion you are drawing." That is true, but it is done on the basis of comparing evidence. What is wrong with that? That is how it works, and it is the only way it works. It is not for nothing that the New Testament begins with four Gospels side by side. That forces one to compare Scripture with Scripture. By the time one reaches Acts, one has hopefully learned that to some extent: to see the differences and similarities, and to discover that what is lacking in one Gospel is present in another. Some say that this concerns the different aspects of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels. That is also true, but it does not alter the fact that it concerns one and the same Man and one and the same time. It therefore actually concerns one and the same history. That is why one must compare Scripture with Scripture. This also happens in the Old Testament. Isaiah and Ezekiel sometimes have the same passages of Scripture, and one must compare them with each other. What is not in the account of the one is found in the other. Kings and Chronicles largely concern the same matters, yet they are formulated very differently. What one does not find in the one is present in the other. Before one draws conclusions

from one passage of Scripture, one really must lay the other alongside it first. That is called Bible study. One must compare Scripture with Scripture, and then one does indeed come to conclusions and understands that the truth concerning the Church is indeed enclosed within the Old Testament narratives and prophecies.

Thereafter one also finds that the same things express themselves symbolically in Old Testament history. When one sees that, one also sees that this continues in New Testament history. That history too proves to have a symbolic and therefore prophetic meaning. Not only in the four Gospels, but also in Acts. Then the Bible comes alive and proves to be truly one whole. But alas, theologians have precisely invented the idea that the Bible is not one whole, but a collection of separate writings that were found here and there and stuck together. These theologians are learned and have discovered that this portion comes from here and that portion from there. They know this from the use of the divine names. And when they cannot make it work that way, they discern it from the style of the Hebrew or the style of the Greek. As though we can establish that afterwards! If you write a piece on Monday and another on Friday and analyse both, it may well turn out that they were written by two different people. It depends entirely on what mood you are in, whether you are fit or not, whether the weather is fine or not, and so forth. But no, theologians can tell from spelling, sources, and the like. That is what is called Bible study nowadays. That, however, is a misunderstanding. That is called higher criticism. Very high indeed, but it has nothing to do with Bible study, for it does not study what is written. If one were to do that in all sincerity, one would come to precisely the opposite conclusion: namely, that however it may be put together, it is one Author and one message. It is astounding to see that certain passages of Scripture, sometimes written centuries apart, are completely the same; with entirely different words and approaching from an entirely different angle, with an entirely different setting, yet with the same message. Also with the same handwriting, but on a higher level. That is what is truly high. Higher criticism is in fact the lowest thing there is, and also the simplest. It only becomes high when one learns to understand the content. 2 Cor. 12:4 How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Paul learned fundamental matters that remain completely unknown in Christendom to this day. They are also things of which he says that they are unspeakable. It is not possible to utter them. It is not said why not. Yet it is not possible to utter them, because no opportunity is given for it.

“Not lawful” can mean that it is not permitted, but also that it is not possible. In practice that amounts to the same thing. If one translates the Greek term literally, it says: it does not exist; it is not existent, translated as: not lawful. There is no opportunity for it. That still means that it cannot or may not be done. In many cases it indeed functions as “not permitted.” “Not lawful” is perhaps not quite the best translation. “Not allowed” would have been better. It may be that it is forbidden, but also that there is no opportunity for it. The latter comes from below, whereas if something is not permitted, it comes from above. People read this as though it comes from above. God showed him something and then said that he must not speak of it. More obvious is that God showed it to him and then said: “There, now you know; now go and finish your homework. Remember what you have seen; here is your Bible...” One can quietly say it that way, for that is how it went.

Although he evidently tried to bring certain things among the people, both in Damascus and in Jerusalem, he could not possibly succeed. Evidently that was simply three steps too far, not only among the Jews but also among the Christians. The result is that he disappeared homeward and was only fetched years later by Joseph, surnamed Barnabas, after which they went together to Antioch. From there he later went on a missionary journey with the same Barnabas. That was when his ministry began. That immediately caused problems, for although they primarily addressed only the Jews, it was not the Jews but the Greeks who came to faith. That was the occasion for the so-called apostolic council in Jerusalem in Acts 15.

Paul occupies a quite special position. He had something to tell them, but it lay on a level that completely transcends the earthly. To the extent that people understand anything of it, they still find that today. Usually they consider it merely academic and of no practical use. That is a great misunderstanding, because knowledge of Scripture does indeed have, and in the first place, a lasting effect on our thinking. What we know from the Bible, especially objective knowledge, we never get away from. That forms the framework for our thinking and for our experience, for our spiritual condition and for our emotions, for the whole man. That is the sphere within which our life is in fact placed. That is precisely the intention. We are to be transformed in our thinking and keep our way pure, that we may keep it according to His word, wherewith our hearts have been filled.

In general there is a complete lack of biblical insight. People know a story here and there, but no coherence at all. They expect, for example, the end of the times, whereas we have long been living in them. Others expect that the world will perish soon, but it will last at least another thousand years. Knowledge of the Bible is required for that. But the Corinthians did not feel inclined to that. They preferred to live by the whim of the day. That is Paul's frustration: he simply could not get his message across. That is also evident from the rest of the epistle. The Corinthians were completely closed to Paul, let alone to what he had to say.

Paul therefore could not get his message across. He communicates it to the Corinthians, but in such a way that they probably had no idea what it was about. Yet it must penetrate to them that they are missing something if they are not willing to listen to him.

In verse 1 Paul said: It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ...

2 Corinthians 12:5

Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. It is of course about the same person. They know Paul as a man with weaknesses and shortcomings. The previous chapters spoke at length about that. He therefore glories only in his infirmities.

2 Corinthians 12:6

For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me.

He will not boast about himself, and he will not be a fool, but he will speak the truth. Boasting is often nothing but lying, puffing up. He does not do that, lest any man should think of him above that which he seeth him to be, or that he heareth of him.

The important point in the whole matter is that the words and teachings of Paul are not based on what he saw when he was caught up to the third heaven, but that his words are simply based on the Scriptures. He himself therefore plays no role in that. He does not proclaim his own opinion, but preaches the Scriptures. Unfortunately that escapes many. Some, precisely those who greatly exalt Paul, say that what Paul taught was all new. You find that nowhere in the Bible, only in Paul. But he demonstrates precisely that this is not so. What he teaches is always based on Old Testament Scriptures and usually with mention of them, with reference thereto. Everything he teaches us, for example in Ephesians, is without question based on Old Testament passages of Scripture and mostly with mention of them. Think, for example, of that from Psalm 68, that He ascended up on high and led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men. Why must he necessarily bring in such a completely obscure text from Psalm 68? Because he teaches us nothing other than what was already laid down in the Old Testament, or in some way announced. Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light (Eph. 5:14). That is a reference to Isa. 60:1–3. It was not new. Thereby he also throws light—not only on those few verses there in Isa. 60—but on the whole passage of Scripture. Just as he suddenly throws light on the whole of Psalm 68. Now you know that Psalm 68 concerns truth about the Church. And so forth. Or think of Galatians 4, already mentioned above, that Abraham had two wives and two sons; which things are an allegory. Thus he applies a great many passages from Genesis, but also from Isa. 54, to the Church.

Paul does not need to glory in what he saw and experienced. He knows that for himself. For his ministry, however, it concerns the Scriptures (Col. 1:25). Moreover, he does know it for himself, but he adds that it does him no good—on the contrary...

2 Corinthians 12:7

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure.

It was of course no small thing. He occupies a position comparable to that of Moses. Of course, Moses as mediator of the Old Testament is a type of Christ as Mediator of the New Testament, but it is certainly not far-fetched to compare Moses as mediator of the Old Testament with Paul. After all, he is the great preacher of New Testament truth. Moreover, Paul had most likely seen the same things as Moses.

Nevertheless, lest he should be exalted in his position, there was given to him a thorn in the flesh. Whole books have been written about that thorn in the flesh. It has received all sorts of applications. It is said to have been an illness. Among other things, epilepsy. When he once fainted he was caught up into the third heaven. He had then hallucinated and that was the third heaven. Others say he had an eye disease. They first make a young man of him, and Paul writes somewhere that he has poor eyesight and therefore he must have had an eye disease. He was however by then quite advanced in years. He was simply old. He is introduced as a young man. In the Bible someone is called a young man up to about the age of forty. Read the biblical encyclopaedias on that. After that the years begin to count, and with the years come the ailments. It was the same

with Paul. That thorn in the flesh? It is no more literal than what he says next, namely that there was given to him a messenger of Satan. That thorn in the flesh is therefore a messenger of Satan. That one buffeted him with fists, lest he should be exalted. It therefore concerns a messenger of Satan. The devil is the adversary. Illness or physical conditions are not regarded as adversary, but as weaknesses of the old man. They can indeed hinder one, but they are not the adversary and certainly not the devil who does it. Some think so, but they have made a god for themselves, a world-view. They say that it is according to God's will that everything in this world should be healthy. Messenger = one who brings a message.

Paul therefore has to do with a message from the adversary. That is an old biblical theme. Unbelieving Israel is called in the Bible a gainsaying people. They have another message, other ideas, another philosophy, another theology; they have their own image of God, which does not correspond to the God of the Bible. You find that throughout the world, in all religions and all world-views. They are devised by the great thinkers of mankind. They are by definition the contradictors. They know better than God, who has spoken. That God has spoken, no one believes any longer nowadays. Not even those who call themselves Christians. After all, they have a Bible that is compiled from all sorts of loose pieces of text that were found here and there. Usually in Babel, the mother of harlots. They stuck them together and then wrote underneath: God. To the extent that they can learn anything from it, it is not because it is the Word of God, but because it was produced by the great thinkers of mankind. Read, for example, a contemporary commentary on Jeremiah. It then concerns Jeremiah, who to a high degree was the inventor of monotheism and who tried to move the Jews to abolish all those other gods and come only to the service of Jehovah. He was a great thinker, moreover with a vision for the future, for he also announced the coming of a kingdom, the Messianic Kingdom. Despite everything he was positively inclined, for it was after all the case that things would go badly with the Jewish state and Jerusalem in his days, but he announced that after seventy years there would be a positive turn. Thereby people pass 100% by the fact that the word of Jeremiah is the Word of God and that he was a prophet. He was not one of the great thinkers, but one of the great messengers, in the sense of those who bring a message. Not "I tell you," or "I think" or "I feel," but "thus saith the LORD." People completely pass that by. Read the introductions to the various Bible books in diverse new Bible translations, and you know what you are dealing with. You immediately also know that you really no longer need to read the translation itself, because it is assumed that it is not the Word of God, but the word of men. The Bible has become nothing more than a piece of cultural heritage, which is retold anew through the centuries. It makes no sense to talk with those people about the Bible. They are talking about something quite different from us. We are talking about the Word of God; they are talking about a collected library, an anthology of writings from antiquity, with a religious character. Paul had to do with that in his days, in particular with the Corinthians, who were not at all spiritually minded. They play at church and therefore cause divisions in the church. After all, one must not be of that one, but of this one. Thus there is ecclesiastical distinction. That is what they were busy with, but there is no place in that for the work that the Lord does and the way in which He revealed Himself in the past concerning His work and position in the present.

What Paul writes here is therefore of the highest importance. It is therefore not surprising that one never finds this in any Bible commentary. People do not understand

it, because they have long since lost the way here. People no longer understand such things at all, because they think that nowadays one must meet the demand of the people. You have a market and you put something in it. You have a demand and you meet it. The real situation is of course the other way round. There is no demand at all and no interest at all. The frustration of the messenger is that he must first ask attention for his product, for his message.

Our society today is dominated by commerce. If you have a product, but there is no demand for it, then you cannot earn from it and so it does not proceed. Nothing to be done. In principle, however, it ought to be the other way round. It works from a sense of being driven. To stay with our subject, the biblical message ought to be preached. That is what people need. Not what they are waiting for and asking for, but we know that they need it and therefore we offer it, because it is good, because it is from God. The frustration then is that people do not see it, have no interest in it, do not want to hear it, and prefer to remain in their own misery and grope about in the dark, and so forth. The problem is that people do not acknowledge the Bible as the infallible and eternally abiding Word of God. Then it simply stops.

Paul stood opposite that kind of people, who were focused on the here and now, who were focused on establishing their own congregation, who were focused on earthly circumstances. They were carnal and children in Christ. Young children, brought up on milk. They cannot bear strong meat, not even now. That is what it is about. To them he cannot get his message across. He has only to do with contradictors.

That keeps him humble. "Lest I should be exalted above measure"; so verse 7 begins and so it ends. Later he writes that everyone had forsaken him.

2 Corinthians 12:8

For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.

It is worth reading carefully here. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice. One immediately lands in the familiar discussions. Must one pray to the Lord? Yes. How often? Evidently three times, for that is written here. Those are, however, the wrong questions. Moreover, three times: in the morning, at noon, and in the evening? Why three times? The answer to such questions comes a little further on, for in verse 14 Paul says that he is ready the third time to come to the Corinthians. He prayed three times and is ready the third time to come to them. One ought to see the correspondence. In 2 Cor. 13:1 he says: This is the third time I am coming to you. That is surely striking. He prayed three times concerning this thing. On the basis of what? He was ready three times to go to those Corinthians. That was for him the occasion to pray on all three occasions that that messenger of Satan might depart from them. That contradictor, that liar from the beginning. He was going to Corinth and prays that there might not immediately be that contradiction. That contradiction obviously hinders him in his preaching. If one does not want someone to complete his story, one interrupts him and begins to make difficulties about what he has said so far, whereby he cannot take another step forward.

Every time he was about to address the Corinthians he dreaded it, because he knew that he would have to do with contradiction and therefore conflict, war. That is always fundamental, but specifically with the Corinthians.

But the Lord said to him (probably all three times)...

2 Corinthians 12:9

...My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Paul had to make do with the grace of God. My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.

Grace = synonym for power.

Most gladly therefore will he rather glory in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him, for when he is weak, then is he strong (end of the next verse).

Paul thus learned from the Lord that it is better to be weak and to feel weak. That immediately means that he does not need to hang up his own story, or apply his own methods, but that he is simply dependent on the power of the Lord that works through him. It comes down to this: the authority he has when he speaks is not his own authority, but that of the Scripture. Under the motto: "It is written...", exactly as the Lord Jesus Himself demonstrated when He was tempted. It is written....

That is the end of all contradiction, or else one throws away the whole Bible. One can do that too, but that is the end of all discussion. With us it is about: what does the Bible teach? Whether that conflicts with prevailing opinions, or with what great thinkers have devised? That is then a pity. We have those Scriptures.

Our intellectual challenge does not consist in developing new theories or world-views, but that we should understand the Scriptures, that we should understand the truth.

"For," said John, "God hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true" (1 John 5:20). Not invent, for no one can do that, said the Preacher. We are to understand the truth, and the truth shall make us free.

That is the secret, not only of the ministry of Paul, but of the Christian life as such. It is not about our power, but about the power of God, which would be made perfect in our weakness. He has also promised that. To His disciples He said that they should not be anxious. They would be brought before councils, before rulers and kings, but they should not be anxious about what they should say, for the Lord would give them words in their mouth (Luke 21:12-15). That is how it is: not trusting in one's own power, but in the power of the Lord. That is living by grace. That one can thereby come into situations such as that in which Paul found himself here can be frustrating, but that is not your responsibility. That the Corinthians did not want to hear, very well, then so be it, however regrettable. It then also does not concern what method one will unleash, but the essence of the problem. They do not want it, and there it remains. It does not change Paul's ministry. Whether they do it willingly or not, it has been entrusted to him. He therefore does it at the command of his Commissioner. That is for their edification, but if they do not want to be edified, then it simply stops.

Grace is unmerited favour. In the closing verses of Hebrews 4 it is stated that, because we have a great high priest, we may come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. That threshold is too high for many. They would rather have the throne of the law, after which they attempt to explain that the difference between grace and law is not really so great. That, however, is the same as trying to explain that the difference between white and black is not so great. They are opposites of one another. The difference between grace and law is therefore absolute. We live under the dominion of grace and thus come to the throne of grace, to the high priest and King, who has received that position at the right hand of God. We do so in

order to receive from thence grace, mercy, and help in time of need. If, for example, temptation comes, then He will also make a way of escape, or He will ensure that we are not tempted above that we are able.

That is also what is at issue here: "My grace is sufficient for thee." Paul must go to Corinth, and the Lord says to him that he need not be anxious. That does not mean that things will turn out well with those Corinthians, but they will with Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

My grace is sufficient for thee;

My strength is made perfect in weakness (thy weakness). "Thy" is not written, but that is because the sentence is kept as short as possible, under the motto: writing is deleting. That His strength is made perfect in weakness is generally true, but here it concerns the weakness of Paul. That is not explicitly stated, but that is because "thy" has been omitted. That it here concerns Paul's weakness is evident from the following sentence...Therefore I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Not even weakness in the singular, but infirmities in the plural. Paul, as it were, goes down on his knees before those Corinthians and says: "You consider me weak? So I am, but precisely for that reason the power of God is made perfect in me, for God makes His power perfect only in weakness. Are you strong? Then you have a problem, for then the power of God and His grace are not made perfect in you."

Grace is not for the strong, but for the weak. That is why the gospel is not after man (Gal. 1:11). That distinguishes the biblical message from everything that goes by the name of religion. Religion is always aimed at promoting human achievement. Possibly by making sacrifices, by giving something up. That creates the suggestion of becoming weak, but its real purpose is to become better by it. Faith is something else, namely: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Faith means: I am weak, but Thou art strong.

Paul expresses it at length here. The Corinthians give him the opportunity, and he makes use of it to bring forward important biblical truth.

In the Old Testament we quite often find the calling of someone by God to be a prophet or otherwise. Often the person then presents himself to the Lord and says: "Lord, Thou hast the wrong person; I cannot do that at all." Then the Lord says: "Oh, but that makes no difference to Me. Just do this and do that." The objection is then: "But Lord, they will not listen to me," whereupon the Lord says again: "I know that, but that is not the point anyway. I will settle accounts with them later. They cannot say they did not know. You must tell them. That they will not believe you, I know that too."

Paul had to say: "Who art thou, Lord?" He had no idea who the Lord was, even though he asked it at the moment when the Lord had already called him.

Therefore: "My strength is made perfect in weakness."

Paul admits that he is weak and glories precisely in what the Corinthians reproach him for. That weakness they reproach him with is precisely his strength. That is, of course, still the case to this day. It is astounding that there are so many who, perhaps in good faith, want to become pastors and do their utmost for it. But once they have graduated, they begin to spout complete nonsense. Then they are qualified and can do nothing more than act clever. They have lost their Bible and are not open to the Word of God, and they come to tell us that one cannot simply abolish the law, while the whole New Testament speaks of scarcely anything else. Well, not that it is abolished, but that it is fulfilled and thereby a thing of the past. It is even stated that it was annulled. Even the

translators of the KJV could not get round the word. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (Heb. 7:18).

Afterwards they hasten to tell us that one must not let go of that law anyway, because the law is rule number one for Christian ethics. Grace is an ultimate means to get us over the threshold of heaven after all. That is official doctrine. It comes because people will not accept the weakness of the natural man. Even in circles where they make much of original sin—“We are sinners, sold under sin”—they say that we must do our utmost to keep the law. First you say that you are good for nothing, and then that you must do your best. The Bible says precisely that man is no good and therefore can do nothing with the law, for it was laid upon the flesh. The law is holy, and just, and good, but I am carnal, sold under sin. I am weak, I am sold under sin. Therefore I must be delivered from that law, for to me that law is a curse. Evidently the idea cannot be eradicated that man must perform something. Therefore it helps when your life lies completely in ruins. That is the ideal moment to turn to the Lord and receive grace from Him. Then you say: “Lord, here I am. I am indeed good for nothing, but Thou hast called me.” Then the power of God is manifested. No, you do not immediately start jumping and skipping and speaking in tongues, but you are gradually transformed, for it is a change of mind. That changes us from within. Then we learn to live from the grace of God, in our weakness, but in His strength and trusting in His promises.

Therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. One had better not do that either, for in itself that is foolish, but it is not wrong to know it for oneself.

This sentence has the same thought as that in Philippians 3:4–6.

Philippians is not a popular epistle, because it teaches that the believer is expected to be servile and therefore even to suffer. That does not necessarily mean that it hurts, although that is not excluded, but it means that one is led. It has to do with “leidenschaft,” with passivity. We also call it passion. One is driven by passion, by enthusiasm, driven by the Spirit. One is so driven by the Spirit that one continues, even if it hurts. It is still the same concept. It is therefore not only about the pain, but precisely about the enthusiasm, of which pain may be the consequence. A man is thereby able to do things he would not do by nature.

Phil. 1:29

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, as a logical consequence thereof. With the result the conflict that comes with it. Passion usually brings conflict with it.

The example of the Lord Jesus Himself is given in the following chapter. He took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:7–8). If you want to say anything about these verses, you often have a great problem, because people generally do not want to hear at all that Christ humbled himself, for if that is so, then we too should humble ourselves, in the sense that we should become servants. That is what people have against the incarnation of

the Lord Jesus Christ. At Christmas they cannot escape it, but for the rest of the year they do not want to hear about it.

Nevertheless, He is our Example therein. After that we get the example of Paul in the following chapter, in which he says in verse 4...

Phil. 3:4

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

He is speaking of religious matters. Blameless by Jewish standards. But...

7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

It is all about his own strength, but he counts it loss and dung. You know where that belongs. Why did he do that? That he might win Christ.

Of course, it is relative. If you apply only earthly standards, then he indeed had a great deal going for him. At least according to Paul. By human standards it may count for something, but to God it is a hindrance. Where a man trusts in himself and in his own strength, there Christ is left out. It is better to be conscious of one's own weakness and to glory therein, provided it is accompanied by the power of God.

There are also people who use their own weakness as an excuse to do nothing at all. They say that nothing can be expected of them. Some have acquired a wheelchair for that purpose. That is of course irony, but such things happen. They keep themselves weak, ill, and nauseous, so that they need bear no responsibility. Stronger still, if you have no throne, you had better acquire a wheelchair, for from a wheelchair it is not too difficult to command your surroundings.

Paul counted those things loss. It is a matter of reckoning (*logizomai*). Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:11). It is a matter of how you look at things. It is a way of reckoning.^{9 ¶}

And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: Not a righteousness that is the result of a religious life, in which one has evidently fulfilled the religious obligations, but a righteousness that is through the faith of Christ Jesus. It concerns a righteousness that is of God, a righteousness that God reckons to us, on the ground of faith. If you look up "*logizomai*" in the Bible, you will see that God reckons faith for righteousness (see, for example, Rom. 3). Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. By earthly standards probably not, but by God's standards yes. If we believe what God has said, then He reckons us righteous.

Conversely: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. The Lord Jesus was reckoned unrighteous by God, because as our Saviour He took our guilt upon Himself. The result is that His righteousness is reckoned to us. It is all a matter of reckoning, of taking positions.¹⁰

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Why did he count everything loss and dung? That he might know Him. To know is not merely to know about, but to have fellowship with. To know is another word for communion. That he might know Him, and thereby the power of His resurrection. Thereby we are back in 2 Corinthians 12. My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. What Paul counted loss and dung was not grace, but law, to which he also conformed. He preferred the power of Christ's resurrection. The idea is namely that the exceeding greatness of God's power is in any case illustrated in the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

By human and physical standards that is utterly impossible, but it happened nevertheless. More important still is that He was raised from the dead in such a way that death no longer has dominion over Him. In such a way that He shall no more return to corruption (Acts 13:34). In short, He rose from the dead and thereby became the firstfruits of a new creation. He received eternal life. That is the power of God. It utterly transcends all powers in this old creation, for one of the most important laws of nature, which evolutionists prefer to forget, is that everything in nature that is at all organised tends of itself to chaos. Conversely, it takes power to bring something to any organisation, after which it must also be maintained. Everything decays. That is the complete opposite of evolution.

The power of His resurrection. How great is the power of God that works in Christ and in the Church?

Eph. 1:19

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

It does not merely say that God raised Christ and set Him at His right hand, for it says that it is a power that works in us. If you ask which power, then Paul says that it is the power that God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. What does this mean? That He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Many believers want to move God to do something, but that is because they do not know what God really does and what Christ really does. If you have understood that He has given us eternal life, that He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3), and that He keeps for us an inheritance in heaven, what more have you to wish for, since He hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3)? After that it indeed says in Phil. 4:4 that one should rejoice in the Lord, and in verse 6 that one should be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And then? Does He then do what you ask? It does not say that. It says that one should let one's requests be made known unto God in every thing. We are therefore encouraged to tell the Lord our cares, what troubles us, what occupies us and takes hold of us. Does that solve the problems? No and yes. It says: And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). In practice it means that those cares then fall away or become much less. The problems are not solved, but we bear them less heavily. We have less the feeling that it all rests on our own neck and that we must face those

problems in our own strength. The Lord is with us and cares for us. Make your requests known unto Him therefore. Back to 2 Corinthians 12.

2 Corinthians 12:10

Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

Those are the things that Paul more or less has on his CV and had already enumerated in chapter 11. He takes pleasure in them. In any case, those events impress upon him his own weakness and thus impress upon him the Lord, on whom he is dependent and who will make His strength perfect in his weakness. That is also stated afterwards: for when I am weak, then am I strong. There is a good reason for that: if you have nothing more to lose and are therefore weak, what can still happen to you? Then you can fully trust in the Lord, who will make His strength perfect. By human standards that is foolish, but these are not human standards. This is reckoning with things that the natural man and thereby this old creation does not know. It is reckoning with what God has promised. You must know those things to be able to entrust yourself to them. Paul defends himself against suspicion

2 Corinthians 12:11

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing.

He blames the Corinthians. He would not have gloried in himself, but now he did so anyway, albeit in a somewhat reversed way. The Corinthians compelled him to it.

2 Corinthians 12:12

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

He was recognisable as an apostle, for the signs, the marks, were wrought among them, namely demonstrated, in all patience. Patience is one of the marks of the apostles. That is very obvious, for apostles are called apostles because they were sent by the Lord Jesus Himself. They were therefore driven.

Other marks of the apostles were signs and wonders and mighty deeds. This immediately means that if we no longer have apostles today, then there are also no longer signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. Perhaps wonders still occur, but a wonder is a stretchable concept. The very idea that a sinner is justified by faith is already a wonder. It is not yet a sign, for signs must be visible. We have learned that the work the Lord does nowadays He does in secret. That has to do with the mystery of the kingdom. He does not do them in the world, let alone before the world, but in secret. Signs, as a demonstration of the power of God, therefore do not belong in this world. God does not now demonstrate them to the world. We as men would like that, so that we can derive some authority from it and attract some public, which is again important for the collection. The Lord will no doubt perform wonders on occasion. Those, however, are not intended as signs. Signs have a meaning. A sign is a signal. It means something. Wonders and signs and mighty deeds in the Bible do not merely have practical use. Stronger still, to the extent that they have any practical use, that is entirely secondary.

They have chiefly a figurative meaning. The bodily healing of someone is a sign of spiritual healing. Not even of someone personally, although that is not excluded. All the healings wrought through the Lord are signs of God's work in this present time, a work that in itself would remain hidden from the world. Therefore it is beforehand illustrated by signs. Those indeed have to do with spiritual healing, not merely of an individual, but of an entire people. All those people who were healed are a portrayal of the healing of the ten tribes of Israel. Perhaps the daughter of Jairus is an exception, but she stands opposite the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, who again is an image of the healing of the ten tribes.

Those signs occur to a lesser degree also in the Old Testament and have the same meaning there. They express God's work in this present time, in which the salvation of Judah has been taken away and gone to Ephraim (as head of the ten tribes and by which all ten tribes are denoted), out of which the Church is built. When they are healed, they are an image of how the Church comes into being out of that. One by one: blind, deaf, prisoners set free, possessed, and so on. That people would walk again, come to life again, and be restored to its original position. It would hear again to the Word of God. In that sense it is also announced in the Old Testament. Lo-ammi, not my people, a people dismissed from the priestly office, would yet in the captivity be called sons of the living God and thus be restored as Ammi, as God's people.

That is expressed in those signs. If you will not see that in them, you will always be left with questions. If things go badly with you, you think it is an example of what the Lord wants to do for you today. If you are blind, He will heal you. Then you must call upon Him and say: "Jesus, Thou son of David, have mercy on me." If He does not heal you then, you must do it for fifty hours on end, and if that does not help, you must do it all together. If that still does not help, you must skip a meal, or two or three, or give up something else, to move the Lord to do something you think He wants to do, but evidently cannot be persuaded to. You must let those things stand in the Bible and learn to understand their meaning. That is the benefit of Bible study, of comparing Scripture with Scripture.

The apostles still performed these signs. They belonged to the first generation of Christianity. In that generation God sent apostles. They were also prophets, by definition. That, however, concerns only that first generation. That is symbolism. In Israel, after the exodus from Egypt, you find the institution of the so-called council of elders from the people. They were appointed by God and invited to assemble. Then they prophesied, but afterwards no more. That is a portrayal of the Church, as the church of the firstborn. At the beginning there was prophesying, but afterwards no more. That is particularly the thrust of 1 Corinthians 12–14, where we are taught clearly enough that those specific gifts had a temporary function. Afterwards it would cease. Characteristic of our dispensation is precisely that God does not demonstrate something. He has hidden Himself, after all!

The Lord Jesus was publicly arrested and publicly crucified, but when He rose from the dead, everything was private. This stands in complete contradiction to what we are nowadays taught about church growth, the publicity we ought to seek, and the methods we must develop in order to meet our targets. There were none of those things at all. Instead of the Lord making a theatrical, demonstrative appearance on the temple square under the slogan "Here I am again!", He appeared in the garden of Joseph's tomb to a few women—or perhaps just one—or to one disciple, Peter, or to the two on the

road to Emmaus, or to the twelve (though there were only eleven) in the upper room with the doors shut, where He told them to gather in Galilee. There He appeared to them once, but not to the Jews, not to Jerusalem, not to Judaea, not to the world. To this very day, He has still not done so. He appeared only to a few believers and only within a period of forty days. After that, no more. That was it.

Indeed, He did appear, but it is described as an exception. So it remains today. He hides Himself, and our lives are hid with Christ in God. No signs and wonders.

Quite apart from that, we have now had two thousand years of church history behind us, during which there have been periods when one might well ask where the Lord was at the time. Surely it would have been easier for Him here and there to perform a sign. That might perhaps have spared thousands, if not millions, of lives. But it did not happen.

The Lord does not do that. He works in secret, with all the consequences that entails.

No signs, no powers. Miracles perhaps, but those occur in the private lives of individual believers.

Apart from that, the great miracle—of which all the miracles in the Bible are a picture—is that the people who were completely regarded as lost, and still are, have in reality been made alive. God has fulfilled His promises in that way. Not through the Jews, but certainly through Israel. That must be regarded as a miracle. Yet if you explain that to people as a miracle, they refuse to believe it.

Paul demonstrated himself as an apostle, just as the other apostles did, with the marks of an apostle. It says here that signs, wonders, and mighty deeds are marks of an apostle. That does not rule out the possibility that on occasion those marks also occurred through others, but those were rather exceptions.

2 Corinthians 12:13

For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong.

First he says that in nothing was he behind the other apostles, and now he speaks of wherein the church at Corinth might have been inferior. Paul's apostleship is expressed in such a church as this one in Corinth, which was founded through his ministry. It was a church like all the others. In fact, we know nothing from the Bible about churches founded by other apostles. We can just about deduce from Peter's letters that he had been in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia—at any rate, he addressed his first epistle to those regions. And however much interest Roman Catholics might have in the matter, they have never been able to prove from the Bible that Peter was ever in Rome. Outside the Bible it appears that he was there, but so was Paul.

The apostles preached throughout the world, and thus churches came into being, such as this one in Corinth. The Corinthians, proud as they were, regarded themselves as one of the important churches. Paul takes them up on that and says: "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? forgive me this wrong." If they are just like those other churches—or even more so—well then, it was his work that brought that church into existence. So surely he is an apostle?

Paul is now becoming rather sarcastic. He has only been less burdensome to them than to other churches, and he asks forgiveness for this wrong. He never took a collection from them and never received any financial support for his labour there. That is

precisely one of the arguments they use against Paul. They say he does it as a hobby. He is not a full-timer. He does not have to live off it.

2 Corinthians 12:14

Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will not be burdensome to you: for I seek not yours, but you: for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.

We do not really know whether he ever came to them again or how often, but at any rate he says he was ready the third time to come to them.

“I will not be burdensome to you” means “I will not be a charge upon you.” “Ye shall not have me as a burden.”

He needs nothing from them, but he seeks them.

He explains why: “for the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” Parents must support their children, at least while they are children. In short, parents are not a burden on their children, but children on their parents. And therefore...

2 Corinthians 12:15

And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

He pays the costs himself. That is of course true, but ultimately it came from the funds of other churches, especially those in Macedonia, which did contribute to Paul's support and ministry. That has already been discussed in both epistles. In any case, the church at Corinth did not have to bear the cost. He regards this as a demonstration of his love for the Corinthians, while at the same time complaining that the reverse cannot be said.

2 Corinthians 12:16

But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

So be it. Although from both epistles one gets the impression that Paul still had great difficulty with it.

He was not a burden to them.

“But being crafty, I caught you with guile.” If you read the various commentaries on this, you see that people try to attribute some bad practices to Paul. They find it rather nice that he serves people with lies, probably under the motto: “Like host, like guest.”

The translators have rendered the words “crafty” and “guile” rather negatively. “Crafty” can just as well be translated positively as “shrewd” or “clever.” Literally it means “with all means.” He knows how to employ every means to achieve something. Then you are clever or shrewd. In a negative translation it becomes “sly,” “roguish,” “cunning.” But it can equally well be positive. The same applies to “guile.” It is taken as trickery or deception, but also as a device. Sometimes you have to pull a trick to get something in a certain direction. Then you have to entice people into something. That need not necessarily be negative. That is often how you deal with children: you cleverly distract them from problems.

What that craftiness and guile consisted of is plainly stated...

2 Corinthians 12:17

Did I make a gain of you by any of them whom I sent unto you?

No. He came himself and sought no gain. The same applied to those he sent to them. That was the craftiness: it cost nothing. They did not have to pay for anything. So it was all easy.

2 Corinthians 12:18

I desired Titus, and with him I sent a brother. Did Titus make a gain of you?

walked we not in the same spirit? walked we not in the same steps?

That brother was probably Timothy. He is often called “the brother,” as for example in Colossians 1:1 and Philipians 1:1—not in the sense of fellow-believer, but co-heir, fellow-servant.

2 Corinthians 12:19

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

Are we excusing ourselves to you again? It can be so interpreted, and it is interpreted that way, because above verse 11 it says: Paul defends himself against suspicion.

Above chapter 10: Paul defends his apostolic authority.

“Think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you?” His answer is that we speak before God in Christ; “but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.” Though the occasion may have been strange, it gave Paul the opportunity to speak for several chapters—rather tedious for us in general—about the position of believers, but also about those who serve with the Word.

People generally have far too much the idea that serving is ruling. That is evident when you ask a preacher how to deliver a sermon: you are guaranteed to hear first that you must decide what you want to tell the people. The Bible is still closed. You must first determine that. Then you must put it into good words. Above all, it must not be too long, because it has been scientifically proven that people cannot concentrate for longer than fifteen to twenty minutes when something is told to them. That, however, is complete nonsense. If people really cannot concentrate for longer than twenty minutes, the speaker is probably not doing it well. If he has nothing to say, it is impossible to listen longer.

In any case, you must first know what you want to tell, then find Scripture passages to support it—texts to underpin what you want to say to the people. Moreover, you must think of illustrations; if possible from the Bible, though nowadays that is not even necessary. The upshot is that such a speaker is in fact telling his own message, but pretending the Bible teaches it, since he quotes texts from the Bible to support his own message.

Do not be mistaken: this is normal; this is how it generally happens. Yet it is not the intention that a preacher tells people something, but that God has something to tell people. It is far better to take a Bible passage and discuss it verse by verse. The primary thing is that the Word of God is preached, and it will not return void. If people think preaching has too little effect, it is either because it does not interest them anyway, or it was not the Word of God—for that would not return void. It must have effect somewhere. It may not be seen immediately, or at all, but the Lord said His Word does not return void. It will have result, one way or another.

Certainly when difficult subjects arise, the apostle Paul too returns to the Old Testament. The most difficult Scripture sections in the New Testament are undoubtedly Romans 9–11. Just count how many Old Testament passages he quotes there, and in context.

Hebrews is another such book. There you find the longest quotation from the Old Testament in the New (Hebrews 8 from Jeremiah 31, on the New Covenant). Look it up. It is full of phrases like “As it is written,” “As in another place it is said,” “As Moses first said, and then Isaiah,” and so on.

That is how the Word of God works. Paul did the same in these epistles; for chapters on end he speaks about how things really are, and that one who preaches the Word is not a church prince or a leader in the human sense, but in reality a servant of God. He is not in the service of the Church, at most a minister to the Church.

It is worthwhile looking up the words “servant” and “minister” in older translations like the KJV. They seem the same, but the translators carefully distinguished them.

Doulos = slave = servant (a bondsman, a serf, someone not his own master). Diakonos = deacon = minister. Sometimes they left it untranslated, thinking it had a specific meaning. Paul calls himself a minister of the Church. Not a servant of the Church. He is not a minister of God, but a servant of God: a slave, a subordinate, a bondsman.

Colossians 1:23

... the hope of the gospel ... whereof I Paul am made a minister;

25 Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God;

The last verse refers to the Church, of which he became a minister: “His body, which is the church: whereof I am made a minister.” It is work in service to the Church, but not on the Church’s orders. It is on God’s own orders, Christ’s own orders. If Paul must give account of his work, he does not do so to the Church, but to the Lord. That means the organisation of the Church happens in a completely different way from that of any worldly organisation. The Lord also said that if you would be greatest, you must become least. If you are greatest, you will become least—but then it is too late. And so he says...

2 Corinthians 12:19

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

They ought to understand how things really stand, and that their criticism of Paul is in reality a recommendation for him. He is weak, but that is precisely the point. It is precisely therein that he is an example and gives direction. We should be aware that we are weak, and that the power of the Lord is made perfect in weakness. The more we exert our own strength, set our own goals, and use our own means, the more we leave the Lord out of account. Zeal, passion, is more than sufficient. For then you will use every means. That is the word “crafty” from verse 16: “Nevertheless, being crafty...” simply because of the zeal. That is sufficient and moreover irreplaceable.

Our society is rather poisoned by pushing that zeal aside, for those who are still zealous are the troublesome people. They do not submit and will not be caught. They cannot be stopped, but press on. That sort of people is sidelined, after which a pattern is imposed from above to which one must conform. If you really have people who can do something and want to, and you impose a pattern on your organisation, you automatically sideline those people. Then it goes wrong.

If you have a company, you should ensure you do not get people whom you have to tell everything and who then do exactly what you say. That gets nowhere. It is better to get people who are as zealous as you are, or more. Then let them get on with it. People say that cannot be done in such a large organisation. Exactly—but then you do not need such a large organisation. You must let people with that zeal get on with it, so they can express themselves. Sometimes it goes wrong, because you are not entirely sure of the motives. Perhaps they do not know themselves, but if anything works, it is that.

It was for the edifying of the church at Corinth. That was the purpose: that they should be built up from children to sons. That is also evident from the following verses, which deal with educational measures. The Corinthians urgently needed reproof. Paul dreads that, because that is actually not his ministry as apostle and prophet. Bringing some civilisation to people does not belong to it, but sometimes it is apparently necessary. Normally it should not be needed, for if people focus on Christ, He does His work in us. Paul regards that upbringing, bringing some civilisation, as a humiliation. He describes it that way for himself too, having to occupy himself with it.

Again, think ye that we excuse ourselves unto you? we speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying.

He does not say this to excuse himself, but it is the reality in which he lives. It is to be feared that the Corinthians did not understand that. It is also something of a threat, for Paul immediately says what he expects from it, and especially what the Corinthians may expect if he should visit them.

2 Corinthians 12:20

For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

“Somewhat” means in some sense, a little, to some extent.

Paul expects that the Corinthians’ state will not match his ideals. Conversely, the Corinthians will not regard him as their ideal leader.

All eight things Paul lists here are in principle the same. It is all fuss, nonsense. Things that are of no use and have nothing to do with seeking the truth. It seems all connected with seeking self-interest. They stand in the way of any decent development. They prevent a person coming to insight and really thinking, understanding the truth, becoming mature. Ultimately it is all childish nonsense. A pity if you occupy yourself with it.

2 Corinthians 12:21

And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

Paul regards these things as humiliating for himself. Not merely that the Corinthians do not esteem him highly enough, but the opposite. That he must do his work in such circumstances, in such a church and at such a level. That is humiliating work for him. He has better things to do. Something finer too, connected with the fact that he had been caught up to the third heaven and heard unspeakable words. He gets no opportunity to make them known, because he runs into debates, envyings, backbitings, and so on. This is a humiliating occupation. It is far below his level, and humiliating that

a church founded through his ministry gets no further than this level. It is very frustrating when you then have to explain the first principles of the doctrine of Christ precisely there.

That expression does not come from these two epistles, but from Hebrews 5. There the writer—probably Paul—speaks at the same level as the Corinthians. We do not know who those so-called Hebrews were. The name is not there either; it was added later, as the letter needed a name. We do not know whom he has in mind, but that does not matter further.

In Hebrews 5 the writer speaks of the High Priest, Who...

Hebrews 5:10

Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

Not hard (difficult) to utter because the subject is so difficult, but because ye are dull of hearing. That means they simply do not want to hear, do not want to know. It concerns the same things as in the Corinthian epistles. It is about the Lord Jesus Christ having a ministry in heaven, in connection with a heavenly people, in His position at God's right hand, as King and High Priest—not here on earth, in Jerusalem or Rome, but in heaven. So it is not horizontal, down here, but in heavenly places—and people are simply not interested in that. They are interested in earthly circumstances and, at best, hope the Lord is too.

They are dull of hearing.

Hebrews 5:12

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Note: again. It had happened once before, but now they need it again. So they need milk again, instead of solid food.

13 For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

“Full age” = mature.

“Use” = habit or practice.

The mature, by practice, have their senses exercised.

Hebrews 6:1

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

3 And this will we do, if God permit.

These are things Christians still get worked up about to this day.

Repentance from dead works = you must live decently;

Faith toward God = at least that God exists;

The doctrine of baptisms. Why plural? You can certainly quarrel over that;

Laying on of hands and resurrection of the dead, literal or not;

Eternal judgment = whether there is a hell, or a heaven.

Paul says we should now leave those things. We no longer occupy ourselves with them, for...

Hebrews 6:4

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

Above those verses stands the heading: Warning against falling away from the faith. That is clear enough, and it is not Paul's ministry. He says we must now go on and speak about Christ as High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. In effect he says we must now speak about Christ's present work and thus also about the calling of the Church. In Corinth Paul had exactly the same problems. That is why he told the Corinthians it would not be a pleasant meeting, yet he planned to come. Probably he never went again, but the intention was there.²¹ And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed.

"Which have sinned" = which have missed the mark; which are off track; which have lost the way. Then follow additions to the debates, envyings, wraths, etc., from verse 20: uncleanness, fornication, and lasciviousness. Traditionally this is of course written in the area of Christian morality, not to say sexual morality. Yet it seems to concern more serious things than that—namely, letting go of the Word of God. That is evident, for if we had read on in Hebrews 6, that is what it is about. It concerns those who were once enlightened, tasted the fruits of the Spirit, etc., but let it go and fall away. They let themselves fall from it. They do not hold fast to it.

That is the term from Hebrews: "If we hold fast the profession of our hope," "hold fast this profession," or "hold fast this profession unto the end." Of course you must hold fast. God has taught it to us, revealed it to us—now ensure that you keep it and abide by it. If you do not, Paul says he can do nothing more for you. He has nothing new to add, and why should we suddenly start all over again from the beginning?

Among the Galatians you find exactly the same thing (and of course it also has to do with the law), where it says that they now want to serve again from the beginning those weak and beggarly elements. "Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" Then you have to start all over again from the beginning. That is how it works in practice. To Timothy, Paul writes it rather more mildly: that as a servant of God you must not strive, for if people will not hear and will not believe, then it simply comes to an end. After that he says that you must remain gentle, for perhaps they will yet come to repentance.

Back to 1 Corinthians 12—no, rather 2 Corinthians 12 and on to chapter 13.

"Which have sinned already" = those who have long since lost their way.

"And have not repented." Of what? Of their falling away. That is also called repentance in Hebrews 6. Paul says there that it is impossible to renew such people again to repentance. That does not mean they cannot repent, but that Paul cannot contribute to it. No one can contribute to it. At most you can tell someone something, but if you have

already done that and he once accepted it but then let it go again, what more can you say to him? Then it simply stops.

The wildest explanations have of course arisen around this passage, simply because people do not know the concept of “repentance” and moreover do not want to accept that both unbelievers and believers must repent themselves. God does not do it; people do it. You are personally responsible for that. God’s call is “Repent ye!” and not “Let yourselves be repented!” Though it is “Be ye reconciled!” Yet all over the world, in philosophical as well as religious circles, the popular idea prevails that everything will come as it must come. All sorts of philosophical and theological ideas are developed in order to maintain a fatalistic way of life. Fatalistic is perhaps putting it too mildly. It is more an apathetic way of life. People duck away from every personal responsibility. Expressions like “if it should happen to come about” are quite common, even in orthodox Christian circles. Or “if it may be given to you.” That “may” and “might” turns up in every sentence, even for the most ordinary things in life. Some then speak of God, others of fate. People shrink from personal responsibility, and they do not even bring up their children properly, for they are bad anyway. So what is there to improve? They are all sold under sin. We are all going to hell. Perhaps there is an exception to that, but then it must be given to you.

That is at least as bad as all those Eastern mystics. There is nothing to be done about it anyway. Such people then also have no purpose in life, no ideals, except dying: nirvana, the ideal, the great emptiness. At some Reformed schools it was taught that this was the same as heaven. It all looks so similar that people confuse these things with one another. Yet the Bible teaches us otherwise. Of course God gives, but you must be willing to take hold of it. The Lord says, “Then you must incline your ear to Me.” You can also incline your heart to the Lord; indeed your whole life. That means coming to Him to receive from Him. That is drawing near to the throne of grace, to receive from Him whatever is needed. Yet the responsibility for that certainly lies with the person himself, and in a later phase with the believer himself. He is responsible for his own life. That must be so, for otherwise he can receive no reward for it either. Of course you can just as well say that it must be so because the Bible says it.

That is the sad thing about those Corinthians, but also the difficult thing about the responsibility of the apostle Paul. He does not say either that it will all come right of its own accord. Some people wonder why you have to preach the gospel in a tent; if someone is seeking, he will surely find! So do we not need to do anything about it? But God wants to use us in His service, for our blessing and for His glory. That is why we do it. There are not many seeking people, but apparently God directs some of them to such a tent. If we were brethren of the closed meeting and the Lord wanted to send a seeker to you, then of course He would send him somewhere else.

- Final admonitions

2 Corinthians 13:1

This is the third time that I am coming to you; In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.

It is all the same witness, but on three different occasions. Nevertheless, it is a biblical principle that for a legally valid testimony there must be at least two witnesses, and preferably a few more. Two or three = a few. It is also a term used in biblical contexts to

refer to the remnant. There is always such a remnant that is faithful to the Word of God and understands the truth. That remnant, those believers, is by definition two or three. It has nothing further to do with numbers. That is who we are, and we know it for certain, for it says: "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." If you take that literally, then during gatherings where more believers come together, the Lord would not be in their midst. It is a fixed Hebrew expression to indicate that there are few, but at any rate they are not alone.

2 Corinthians 13:2

I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare:

Paul says that he had announced beforehand the things in question, that he had written about them, and now says it beforehand again. When he comes, he will not spare those who have sinned. He will then tell them the truth. That ought to be frightening enough. He will then reprove them. Not because he bears that responsibility, or because he is a church ruler, or oversees the enforcement of the statutes. It is simply about preaching the Word of God. We do not need to keep figuring out anew how it ought to be. It is all plainly in the Bible. What you are morally responsible for is to listen to His Word and let yourself be taught by Him, and not to ask along the way what you are supposed to do with it, or why something makes sense, or why we need to know something. If you ask those questions at school, it more or less comes to an end too. Apparently you then have no motivation at all and are not interested in the subject matter. If you do not beforehand entrust yourself to what you are taught and to your teachers, then nothing comes of that whole education. Hence things like participation and co-determination are deadly to any form of education (participation without insight is pronouncement without prospect).

Education is by definition authoritarian. It is the passing on of.... Paul is such a passer-on. He says so several times in both epistles. He says about it that whether he does it willingly or unwillingly, if he does it he has a reward, and if he does not do it... well, it has been entrusted to him, so he must. He has no choice in the matter: "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

Paul therefore intends to come, and they can count on it that he will not spare them. He has splendid arguments for that, which are handed to him, of all people, by the Corinthians themselves. We have already seen some of them, but here comes another one...

2 Corinthians 13:3

Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

"Proof" = evidence.

If then he is no apostle and so in their eyes does not fully count, if they cannot see Christ in him—well, if Christ were to visit them, then He too would not spare them. Then He would have quite a lot to say to them. And if you want to see Christ in Paul, all right, then he will not spare them. He will do so on the basis of the authority he has received

from Him. That applies in general to those who preach the Word of God, but certainly to someone who is officially regarded as an apostle and thus as one sent by the Lord Jesus Himself. If therefore they seek proof that Christ speaks in him, then that proof is that he will not spare them.

The Word of God is authority. We no longer know that; it took us centuries to get rid of it, but in the end we succeeded. Since then we learn nothing more. Nowadays it is quite a normal reaction that when someone hears something for the first time, he says it cannot be true, because he has never heard it before. What an argument! That is true arrogance: "I have never heard it, so it cannot be true."

Nevertheless, Paul would speak with authority. That is not his authority, though he had that, but that of the Scripture. Of course Paul had authority as an apostle. He was both apostle and prophet. When he writes his epistles and says something specific, he immediately adds: "As it is written...", or "And Moses saith first...", or "And again Isaiah saith...", or "And again in the second psalm it is written...", or "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet, saying..." and so on. In many cases he says he is quoting directly from the Old Testament, but in many cases he does so without saying it. When it says "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit", that too comes from the Old Testament, though it is not stated. He always bases himself on the Scriptures.

He makes use of that authority. However much he was caught up to the third heaven and saw unspeakable things and heard unspeakable words, when he tells us something, it is on the basis of the Scriptures. That is the only thing that counts. So it is not the authority of Paul, but of the Word of God.

Ultimately that authority is of course stronger than that of the prophets in the Old Testament. They had to say "Thus saith the Lord...". No one could check that. Well, occasionally yes, because then it referred to the Mosaic books. The only authority such a prophet had was that he had heard it from God and had to pass it on. That was not immediately verifiable.

By contrast, the authority of Paul, and also of the other apostles—at least as far as we have writings from them in the Bible—was much stronger. In the first place because they were apostles and prophets. More than that, their writings are in the Bible and therefore they were prophets. In the second place they based their statements on the Old Testament. That is much stronger. You could doubt those New Testament apostles and their New Testament letters, but that does not alter the fact that what they write is indeed based on the Old Testament.

Paul writes in Ephesians 4 that the Lord, in His resurrection and ascension, led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. He adds that it means the Church is seated with Christ in the heavenlies, for we in practice are that captivity. And God has given gifts in the Church: some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the edifying of the body of Christ and the perfecting of the saints (Ephesians 4:11–12). If he had not written it there, it would still be in Psalm 68:18: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." If you had only Psalm 68:18 and not Ephesians 4, then what is written there would be either completely incomprehensible, or you would conclude that at some time in New Testament days something of Israel is gathered and is in a kind of captivity. The Lord will care for them there; they dwell there together with the Lord and the Lord dwells with them. It is in

Psalm 68, and Ephesians 4 helps us explain that Scripture passage. You cannot conclude otherwise than that it is about the Church and the appointment of the Church as a people of firstfruits, out of but also above Israel. And so on. In other words, the authority of the apostle Paul is not merely his authority because the Lord had given him a commission, but the authority of the Scriptures, which he opens up for them. Back to 2 Corinthians 13:3.

I will not spare you...3 ...Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you.

You know, that Christ who is surely not weak, but mighty among you. You understand that this is irony. "Which to you-ward is not weak..."

Well, Christ is weak among them. He is not mighty among them. That is precisely the point. But if they claim that He is mighty and not weak and thus acts and does great things among them, then they may expect from Paul that when he comes in the power of Christ, he too will do great and mighty things among the Corinthians. This is sheer irony, as we have encountered quite often in both epistles.

2 Corinthians 13:4

For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

According to the old man He was crucified through weakness. If you claim that, you can get into great trouble. People generally do not want to hear about the weakness of Christ, or of Jesus. Yet the Bible teaches it. Yet it cannot be, for as you know the Lord Jesus on earth was God. So He cannot be weak. Yet it stands there.

Hebrews 5:2

Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

That really is about Christ. It is about the requirements a high priest must meet. For a high priest is one taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

He can have compassion on the ignorant and those out of the way, as he ought. And he can do so because he himself also is compassed with infirmity. Such a one is made high priest. In any case, that applies to Christ, for that is what it is about.

A high priest is taken from among men. People then say that He was God, but because He had to become High Priest He quickly disguised Himself as a man. He pretended to be a man. And yes, God fell for it and thought: "Hey, let Me appoint that Man as High Priest." This is of course utter nonsense.

The Lord Jesus did not appear in human form; He became man. And so He had a human form and took upon Him the form of a servant. That was no disguise, but real. He had to. Thus He became the Son of Adam, the Son of man. People in Jewish-Christian circles say that this is a title of humility. That is certainly not so, for it is the highest title a man on earth can bear, namely the heir of Adam.

Son = heir.

In that capacity He humbled Himself, and on the ground of His obedience God took Him and highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. So He took Him from among men and ordained Him in things pertaining to God for men.

He was indeed compassed with infirmity. Infirmity, however, is not merely lack of strength. Infirmity is also that certain things are indeed developed (that is strength), but

at the point where that development stops, there is infirmity. Then further strength is lacking. That may be because there really is no further strength, but also because another, stronger power is at work that holds back the first power. That is so in the lives of all people. That is why you can have a “weakness” for someone. That is an infirmity because it restrains a person. It imposes limitations on him, if only because it lays responsibilities on him.

As far as Christ is concerned, He is compassed with infirmity. He died too, after all. There His life ended. Then He lacked the strength to live further. It happened with violence, but that is not the point now. It happened. There it stopped, because He had a weakness for mankind. Perhaps you could better say: because He had a weakness for His heavenly Father, Whom He served. That is perfectly legitimate language. That infirmity limited Him in His doing and not doing. The Bible speaks of the weakness of the Lord Jesus, so that He can have compassion on the ignorant and those out of the way, as He ought.

Hebrews 2:18

For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

You can never say: “You can indeed pray to God or the Lord Jesus, but what does He know... What we humans on earth go through! He is God.” But the Bible says He does know much. He knows it. He Himself was also compassed with infirmity, at any rate He has been. But it says He is compassed with infirmity. Moreover the Bible teaches that He is still man. As Man and as Son of man He now has a function, and as Man and Son of man He will claim His rights here. If a man is by definition weak and limited—well, then so is He. Whether we understand that is another matter.

God’s power is made perfect in weakness. Paul says he will glory in his infirmities, for when he is weak, then he is strong, that the power of Christ may rest upon him and remain and be manifest.

For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

According to the old man perhaps weak, but what does it matter, for it is the power of God that is manifested in Him.

And now directly to the Corinthians: “You find Paul weak; you weigh him up and compare him with other apostles and evangelists.” Well, Paul may have been weak, but so was Christ, and He died. Nevertheless, the power of God works in Him and He lives by the power of God. So too with Paul. It is precisely the power of God that worked in him, in and through that weakness.

For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God. Here Paul evidently means himself with “we”, but the Corinthians too. That they are weak does not matter, for the life of Christ would work through them.

The “shall” must not be reasoned away into the future or into the resurrection, for “shall” is used particularly in the New Testament, but also in English, often in logical reasoning. If the one is true, then logically the other will be true too. If we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with him. In the Epistle to the Romans that line of thought is followed several times, and the context there also shows that it does not refer to a future resurrection from the dead, but to the present life of the believer. We are raised up together with Him, and so that Spirit that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken our mortal bodies. Not merely in the future, but in the present. That is what this

is about too....For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God. Already now. Paul says that that life will also be manifest when he visits them. They can reckon with that, for he will not spare them.

That power of God is of course present in the Corinthians. So Paul still gives them room. They may be weak, young children in Christ, but nevertheless that power of God is potentially in them. That is simply what regeneration means, for that is receiving the Spirit of God. Yet that life must have room to develop. That is generally the problem of man, and unfortunately therefore also of believing man. He could develop, for there is sufficient in him, but alas man regards it as civilised when development is restrained. Civilisation is actually levelling, making flat. Hence civilisation automatically leads to democracy and to a lawn. Everything is flattened so that no one sticks his head above the parapet. There is nothing in itself against mannerly behaviour, for after all we must live together in a full land. Only in a hut on the heath does no civilisation remain, but only what is in your heart and what you have learned. That is the only thing that really counts.

In any case, the intention is that the life of Christ in the believer comes to development. That needs guidance, but also encouragement. Perhaps coaches are needed too, but as soon as those fellows become technical directors, you had better no longer trust it. Then everything suddenly has to fit within the rules and standards of the club. Then it becomes too artificial and too imposed. Biblically, the life of Christ in us would be manifest. That cannot be implanted in any organisation whatsoever. If you try to implant it in an organisation (which is impossible anyway), then you get debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and so on. Then it becomes just like politics: dividing the whole of the Netherlands into boxes and systems and everything according to rules. If you do that with Christians, you get the same. There are always people who are passed over and jealous of another. That happens in society too. Books have been written full about how to prevent it. But if you try to prevent it and regulate it, it arises precisely.

The only thing that really works is the Word, that we should let it be planted in our hearts. We should keep that Word in our hearts and make it the standard for our lives. In the New Testament that is called the measure. The Word should be the measure for our lives. Whatever else happens, by human standards it may not turn out well; the point is that the life of Christ should be lived in us. For that we have been redeemed. It is a struggle to get rid of all those worldly principles, to get rid of all those regulations and standards that are applied. They do not work, not even in Christianity. That has long been proven. The only thing that counts is the power of Christ in each one of us, and Christ is not bound and is not under the law.

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

We know that line of thought also from 1 Corinthians 11. One should examine oneself. That is better than being examined by God. Now and then you should put yourself under the microscope. It is not about psychological matters, for that will not work anyway. Psychology as a science is a nonsensical discipline. The discipline may be needed to get people somewhere, to move them in a certain direction, but to think that a scientific basis can be used for it? The psychologists themselves have proven that it cannot. Yet

you can consult yourself whether you indeed live by faith, live out of the Word of God, or live out of so-called human wisdoms, or what is supposed to pass for that.

“Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?” After some time you ought surely to be able to establish that Jesus Christ is in you? Not in the populist way, namely that you can do signs and wonders or speak in tongues. Not that, but in some way or other you ought surely to be able to establish that the Lord is in you and that the power of Christ works in you. Prove your own selves.

The difficulty with that is that you would then have to know Christ in some way or other, for if you do not know Him, you cannot recognise Him in your life either. People sometimes say that they pray but notice nothing of it. They ask the Lord for all sorts of things, but apparently He does not answer those prayers. They then think that is the norm. Yet James says: “Why should the Lord do what you ask Him? Why should the Lord give you what is on your wish list? Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss.”

People then turned that into: you must believe that the Lord will give it to you. That is of course foolishness. The point is that if we abide by His Word and in practice live out of it, if His Word determines our thoughts and our whole view of life—and thereby to a large extent our actual way of living (that is, living by faith)—then you most certainly do notice that Jesus Christ is in you. If that is not the case (except ye be reprobates), then that is not the Lord’s fault. It lies with yourself—whether you are willing to go that way. These are difficult things. You cannot tell one another how to live. We must prove, experience for ourselves, what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God (Romans 12:2). You learn that only if you first present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God (Romans 12:1). That is a practical matter. That is where these things begin, and that is where you must abide. That is it: you have given your life to the Lord, and that has consequences for daily life. Only then does the power of God begin to work in you. He does not do it in our way, but in His way. That is different for each one of us. That is why it says: “Examine yourselves...” If you look back, you ought to be able to observe it.

That is the homework the Corinthians receive, in anticipation of Paul’s “threatening” visit. He asked them whether he should come unto them with a rod, and here he says he will not spare them. He hopes that when he has once come, he will not be humbled any further.

2 Corinthians 13:6

But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.

7 Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

Doing evil is generally regarded as breaking the law. Doing good is doing what the law says and especially not doing what the law forbids. And so you get that earthly, that lowly, that unprofitable life under rules and regulations again, by which in practice people avoid—and thus in fact reject—every personal responsibility and therefore every personal experience.

Good and evil were already mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5...

2 Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

The good is life under the New Covenant of the Spirit, and the evil is life under the Old Covenant of the letter. The ongoing discussion that always pursues us concerns the extent to which we, even as children of God, should still live under the law and place ourselves under rules. That is evil, for thereby one is not serving the Lord and certainly not the grace of the New Covenant, but the bondage of the law—which was indeed ended by the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. At any rate, its dominion was.

I pray to God that ye do no evil. In the case of the Corinthians you could say that the evil is life according to the flesh. If it had been the Galatians, the evil would have been life according to the law. In practice the two overlap to a large extent. Living according to the law is living according to the flesh, for the law was given to the flesh and is therefore weak and unprofitable.

2 Corinthians 13:7

Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates.

All right, let us be reprobates, as long as you do the good and live under the principles of the New Covenant, for God hath made us able ministers of the new testament.

That good and evil are directly connected with the truth is shown by the next verse...

2 Corinthians 13:8

For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.

“For” indicates a causal connection between verse 7 and what follows. From this it is clear that the good has to do with the truth: accepting the truth, believing the truth, living in the truth, and even standing in the truth. The evil is of course the opposite.

We can do nothing against the truth. That is why truth is called arrogant. Truth is unyielding; truth tolerates no input; truth tolerates no discussion. That would serve no purpose anyway. People want to discuss and want to be proved right. They think that if they are proved right, they evidently have the truth. Discussion about the Bible is foolishness. It comes from the devil. That is what he does: “Yea, hath God said...?” Then we say, “Yes, God has said that,” and we feel very believing. You should not even enter into that discussion at all. It changes nothing. Truth is truth; you either believe it or you do not.

What we perhaps discuss is whether the Bible says something or not. Yet in practice many of those discussions are often about trying to get out from under something. That sort of discussion therefore has little point. The Bible says it, plain and simple. Whether you want to believe it or not is your own responsibility.

It is wise to believe what the Bible says. When you one day stand before the Lord, you can at least say that you read it and thought that was it, according to your conscience. You always believed that the Lord would lead you into the truth. He would do so, would He not? The Bible teaches that, and so we accept it, whatever happens. Whether we understand it is quite another matter. That comes later. The Lord said that if we abide in His Word, we would know the truth and therefore understand it. That truth would make us free. As we understand the truth, the truth also works. That is the intention.

We can do nothing against the truth. It simply stands. We can do something for the truth, whereby the concept of “power” from the preceding verses is replaced by “truth.” Those two concepts are to a large extent synonymous. Truth is by definition powerful

and authoritative. The abolition of authority in our reasonably modern society is closely connected with the abolition of truth. Nowadays it is denied that absolute truth exists. Truth apparently exists only in human experience. Therefore everyone has his own truth. Thereby the concept of “truth” has been denied.

In any case, God is Truth and God is Power, and He stands. So it is with truth too. Truth is powerful and stands. Truth is therefore also authoritative, as God is authoritative. He is the highest Authority, and it is wise to submit to Him—and thus also to the truth.

2 Corinthians 13:9

For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

If we are reprobates in your eyes, all right, so be it. As long as you are strong.

And this also we wish, even your perfection. That is what Paul is concerned about: their perfection, their becoming mature. They were after all young children in Christ, but Paul wishes that they may become mature in Christ.

Mature people are mature when they take responsibility for their own lives, for the choices they make. Without responsibility there is no maturity; without responsibility, incidentally, there is no freedom either. Through freedom you arrive again at truth, which would make us free. It is therefore very mature to submit—not to law (for that is childish; you may expect that of children), but to the truth, which you have come to know and accept as such, and whose consequences you bear.

God gives gifts to the Church (already quoted above)...

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Work of the ministry = service. Service for the edifying of the body of Christ. That is what those gifts are for. How does it work?

15 ...But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ;

“In all things” = in every respect, in every aspect. We should therefore in everything speak the truth in love. The result is...

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

Actually it does not say “wind,” but “current” or “stream.” Every doctrinal current, then. Yet these very things so characterise Christianity. Within Christianity there are all sorts of doctrinal currents, hypes, rages, fashionable things, trends. They constantly change, like ebb and flow. Now we all bend one way, then the other. Concepts like “stand” and “stand fast” are then no longer present. That is childish behaviour.

Mature people stand. They know the truth, stand in it, and live out of it. That is the goal of the life of all believers. That is also the practical goal of the work of the apostle Paul in particular.

2 Corinthians 13:10

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction.

Paul writes this letter so that when he comes he will not have to do these same things himself. It is also easier for him to write them than to go into direct confrontation with the Corinthians. So he sends them these letters beforehand, hoping that they will have some effect and that his visit to Corinth will go somewhat more pleasantly. In any case, we cannot find in the Bible that Paul was ever back in Corinth again.

Paul hopes that he will not have to use sharpness. That corresponds to his not sparing them, or perhaps using the rod, as he had already written earlier.

That sharpness he has according to the power which the Lord has given him. Power is also strength, but not so much on the physical level, but more juridically. In the Bible you can nearly always replace “power” with “right.” And so it is a synonym for authority. He has the power to do it; he is authorised to do it. He has received the authority to do it.

The power, the right, the authority, which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction. The Corinthians and all who are “Corinthian,” even in our days, regard it precisely as destruction. People generally regard the teaching of God’s Word as breaking down. They are afraid of it and say so plainly. The Bible only brings division. Yet the point is that they cannot bear the criticism and therefore regard the Bible as destruction. As an argument they then say that the Bible was written in a very different time; circumstances were quite different then, not of this age. After all, you have to think somewhat evolutionistically, in the end. That has greatly influenced and gripped all our modern thinking.

The Bible does indeed break down the old man. It declares the old man dead. The Bible says there is no good in man. People say you must do what your heart tells you. Well, out of the heart proceeds... well, little good in any case. It can be otherwise, for the term is not entirely wrong, but the Bible presupposes that our hearts would be filled with Christ. The intention is that Jesus dwells in our little hearts. That is how it is told to children. At least it used to be. In more biblical terms: the word of Christ would dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). Then comes: out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Therefore the heart should be filled with the Word of God. With teaching in the Word of God, then.

That would be edifying.

So the Lord has given Paul that power to sharpness, for edification. It concerns the edifying of the Church, the building up of that spiritual house, that temple, that royal priesthood, or however it may be called in the various Scripture passages. Or, as it already stood at the beginning of the first epistle to the Corinthians: Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? That is what is being built upon, on the foundation that has been laid. Paul had laid that foundation in Corinth. Upon that it is built. The Head of the building, the chief corner stone, the Head of that body, is Christ Himself.

Paul had the power for edification, the right for edification, and the ministry to do it too. That is not destruction, but if there are ruins somewhere, rickety constructions built by men, then those must first be broken down.

For obvious reasons people do not find these things popular, but suppose that in our days someone manages to build a temple in Jerusalem, or what is supposed to pass for one—then that will certainly be broken down. Leaving the temple aside, people have set

about restoring Jerusalem, but when the Lord comes it will first be broken down. Then there shall not be left one stone upon another. That applies to the temple, to Jerusalem, but also to the complete Jewish state. It is all man's work and will be broken down. That does not happen only with Jerusalem, Judaea, and Samaria, but also with the individual believer. We must learn that the old man does not count. Insofar as that old man is a tool, one should place it at the Lord's disposal. We should yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God, present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. They should be vessels of mercy, which the Lord would fill and perhaps use.

That is the pulling down of the old man and the building up of the new man.

In Isaiah 55 it does not say that man must come to God with all his thoughts, after which God will bring some order into them, but that man should forsake his thoughts and his own ways and incline his ear to Him, because His thoughts are higher than ours. The intention is not that you adjust your thoughts a little, but that you put them away. The great problem in teaching generally is that what is set before a man, he tries to fit into what he already knows or believes. Sometimes that can be done, but fundamentally it does not work. You often have to unlearn first. That is why you must start certain things early, for if you learn them young you do not first have to unlearn. Generally it is so that as soon as the Bible is opened, it clashes with all sorts of traditional Christian creeds. Those are fixed. People often do not know the Bible, but know about a triune God and so on. Then you come with the Bible and there is no getting through. Unless people are willing to lay those things aside for a moment (after all, you do not throw away your old shoes before you have new ones). You would try to relativise those things and consider that perhaps you have viewed all those things wrongly. The difficulty of learning lies not in the learning, but in the unlearning of what has been wrongly acquired. That is why teaching from the Bible is often regarded as pulling down, while it is precisely building up. God takes away the first (the old man) to establish the second (the new man). He does not slide them into one another.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Be perfect = become mature.

Does that bring joy? People who have to become mature are usually grumpy. That is how it is with adolescents. They do not know the way and are discontent with the present situation, but they also dare not take the step to maturity, for maturity is taking responsibility and standing by your choices. Not only setting yourself against something, but also accepting something. That is indeed difficult.

The things mentioned here are all characteristics of the New Covenant and fruits of the Spirit.

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:3–6).

Be of one mind. That has to be said to the Corinthians, who were divided by definition. They more or less invented the word: "there are divisions among you," schisms, with all the consequences.

Be glad, be perfect, become mature.

Be of good comfort. Comfort is one of the designations of the New Covenant. Comfort by definition means that the old goes away and the newer, better comes in its place. That is not evolutionistic, for that is the old developing into the new. That is not biblical, for it is the old being taken away and something new coming in its place. The old has passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). It ends with the old heaven and earth fleeing from before the face of Him who sits on the great white throne. And there was found no place for them. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Revelation 20:11; 21:1). That is the principle, and that is comfort.

Live in peace. Have peace with all men. Peace is always a relationship between at least two parties. We ourselves are only one party. Whether there is peace does not entirely depend on us. Romans 12 says...

Romans 12:18

If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

In Ephesians 2:14 it says that Christ is our peace, who hath made both one.

Be of one mind therefore and live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Love is really a kind of synonym for peace, for love stands for unity, or the pursuit of unity, or the power that makes one. So it simply says: the God of love and peace. Not because they are two different things, but because they are in fact one thing.

Be glad, become mature, be of good comfort (let the old be replaced by the new), be of one mind, live in peace. That is in itself fruit of the Spirit, but for the occasion it is here turned round. Where that is so, there the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you? Whether He is there or not depends on this.

Joy is of course a relative concept. You do not have to pretend to be glad either. But being of one mind and living in peace is still to a large extent a choice you make yourself. Insofar as these things are not so in your life, it at any rate helps to know that this is the intention. That is in fact the background of all those Scripture passages that point us to the Christian life and its results.

If you do not properly understand those indications, you read law again. In Romans 12:9 it says that love should be without dissimulation and that you should abhor that which is evil. Those then become precepts. And how do you do that? Is it still the fruit of the Spirit?

Moreover, if they were precepts, you might as well read the law. Remarkably, Paul does not do that. That is surely an important argument for the fact that we are not under the law. These are not precepts, but indications of how it should go in normal Christian life. It helps you to aim at that. You know that is the way of a believer under the New Covenant. You know that is the fruit of the Spirit. You know that should be the result of the indwelling of the Word of God. Where these things are and where we pursue these things, there the God of love and peace shall be with us. That means He does indeed care for us. That we do not go through life alone, but that the Lord is with us; that He has compassion on us, who also have to find our way as believers in a world that is not ours. That brings difficulties enough. But He will with the temptation also make a way to escape. He has promised that. When we are weak, then He is mighty. Yet we must be willing. The responsibility therefore lies with ourselves. We should make a choice and surrender ourselves to His truth, to His Word, and give Him the opportunity to teach us.

Isaiah 55:1

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

2 Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.

3 Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.

Can you then buy the truth and the Word? Yes, we pay with our own lives. It costs us time and energy; we must focus on it; that does indeed come at the expense of the old man. But fundamentally we get it for nothing, and it is the work that the Lord would do in us. It is His power that would be made perfect in our weakness.

“Farewell” in the King James Version is translated as “be glad”: fare ye well. That is it too, partly because the expression itself was common then. It was used in greeting, both coming and going.

In Greek: chairō.

We know that word in English as “cheer.”

With “be glad” you cannot do very much, unless you regard it as a greeting.

Paul takes leave of the Corinthians and says: “Fare ye well.”

Actually with that expression you are back in 2 Corinthians 1:24...

2 Corinthians 1:24

Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

If we have gained any impression from these epistles of the circumstances in which these believers at Corinth lived, then we also have the impression that they were not happy. It was a matter of strife. Not soldiers of Christ, but mutual strife, actually proceeding from the old man. That need not have been, for the walk of life should proceed from the indwelling of the Word, the indwelling of Christ, or the indwelling of the Holy Spirit

More familiar in this connection is probably Philippians 4:4...Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

Not just: Rejoice, but rejoice in the Lord alway. It is not merely about a feeling of gladness that might perhaps be aroused under certain circumstances. It is about rejoicing in the Lord at all times. Hence this call at the end of the epistle.

Become mature. Mature and perfect are words we do know in English, but seldom use. Yet they do appear in the Bible.

Ephesians 4:11

And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets...

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;

Sometimes it is translated as “equipping,” but with that word you think more of armour or something handed to you to do your work with. That is external, something you receive. That is of course not this. Here the believer does not receive something external, but within himself.

Perfection has to do with maturity, though that maturity is actually mentioned in the next text.

Those apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers have also been given to us for the work of ministry. They should not have dominion over our faith, but be helpers of our joy. That ministry would be for the edifying of the body of Christ. In itself that is a strange expression, for bodies are usually not built up but grow up. Edifying here of course has to do with temple-building. The Church is built to be a house.

Although we tend to prefer the word “body” in a biological context—such as a human or animal body—it need not be limited to that meaning. A body can also signify a composite unity: a unity composed of diversity. Etymologically, the word “body” means something like a sack of bones, a bag of bones, a corpse-frame: a “corpse” being a dead body, and “frame” an enclosure or sack. In practical terms, therefore, the word denotes a composite unity. It is one body, yet consisting of diversity. It is one collective, yet to each one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Ephesians 4:7). Within that collective, grace is given to each part (member, believer). Here it is no longer collective but individual. All those believers together form one body, or one temple.

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 14 For the body is not one member, but many.

One has this gift and another that. Not all the organs in the human body have the same function. The same applies to the body of Christ. There is diversity, yet it is expected to be a unity.

Back to Ephesians 4:12. That speaks of the building up of a temple. So it is described in many places. Here too, with a reference back to Ephesians 2:19–22: built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

This so-called stylistic break—the building up of a body—you also find in 1 Corinthians 3:9...

1 Corinthians 3:9

For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building. First Paul says there that he planted and Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Then what is being cultivated suddenly becomes a building, namely a temple. “God’s husbandry” refers to the verses that precede, and “God’s building” to those that follow. They are not dead stones, but living stones, being joined together with or to that one Stone. Thus we grow unto a holy temple.

Back to Ephesians 4:12.

A work for the perfecting of the saints, a ministry for the edifying of the body of Christ. Not the bodies of Christ, but the body. There is but one Church, but one body.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: First it was the perfecting of the saints, and now unto a perfect man. Thereby those words are made fairly synonymous. One is completed, perfected, repaired, adjusted, corrected, but the result is perfection, by which the final goal will have been reached. In Matthew 4 “perfect” is used in the sense of repair. Something was not right and it is put right.

Matthew 4:21

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

We just read “perfecting,” and the same word is here translated “mending.” It is not about making different nets out of those nets, but repairing the same nets. We find this word also at the end of the Epistle to the Hebrews...

Hebrews 13:20

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

The God of peace = God is characterised by peace. This implies that He also gives peace, makes peace, and perhaps even is Peace.

From verse 20 you are expected to conclude that “the great shepherd of the sheep” is symbolic. We are not sheep, except figuratively. The Lord calls Himself Shepherd over those sheep, which does not mean He was a shepherd by trade. A more literal term for Shepherd is High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. That was what the whole epistle was about. He is the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, after He had by Himself purged our sins (Hebrews 1:3). He is set down at the right hand of God, made so much better than the angels, and made High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. That is what the whole epistle is about. At the end of the epistle He is suddenly called the great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Blood and covenant are terms explained in the epistle. Thus it becomes clear that shepherding is priesthood.

Actually, priesthood and everything connected with it is also symbolism. That is why it is not necessary to emphasise the Priesthood of Christ in all those New Testament epistles. It is named only in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Yet you are expected to understand what it means. He is responsible for the ministry of the Word of God, so that the flock—or His people—may feed on it. He makes us lie down in green pastures. That is the description of the Priesthood of Christ. He gives us food in due season (Matthew 24:45, though the reference appears to intend Psalm 23 or similar).

That shepherd of the sheep—make you perfect...In Corinth it says: Be perfect, and the God of peace shall be with you.

The shepherd of the sheep—make you perfect. The consequence of that work is now also stated: make you perfect in every good work, to do his will. That perfecting, becoming mature, being equipped, being prepared, has this purpose. Make you perfect in every good work—not only that you may know His will, prove it (Romans 12:2), but also do it. Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. In short, therefore, there is indeed practical benefit in studying the Word of God. It makes the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

The man of God is therefore made perfectly equipped through the teaching of that one Word of God. That is why God gave to the Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints. These apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers therefore have the responsibility to minister, preach, and teach the whole of Scripture. That also determines the selection applied

here. When we speak of spiritual gifts, we soon come to lists such as those in 1 Corinthians 12.

Several of those gifts are not directly aimed at the ministry of the Word. The gifts each of us has are very diverse, whereas here in Ephesians only four are named, because all four are directly concerned—also officially—with the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. All those other spiritual gifts are of course subordinate to these four.

Compare it to an army. After all, we are soldiers of Christ. Whoever is involved in combat is not involved in organising supplies. Others are responsible for that. You also need supply and transport units. Moreover, there must be a kitchen somewhere where the cook can prepare food for all the soldiers—preferably not on the front line. There are various branches of the army, but in the end they all serve that front line. To be perfect, complete, means that you are equipped, mature, and fit for every good work. Thoroughly furnished unto all good works. How often in the past did you not hear that you had to go to school—not because there was compulsory education, but because otherwise nothing would become of you. You must first learn certain things, which at the time you often understand nothing about and usually see no use for. But you have to learn them, and that makes a great difference later in life.

Hebrews 10:5

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

Prepared. Thou hast prepared me a body—made it perfect, equipped it.

14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Because of the different translations of the word you miss the connection between these verses: prepared in verse 5 and perfected in verse 14. Yet there is a connection, for just as Christ Himself was once prepared, so to speak, so are we prepared, because we are in Him.

The meaning of this is very little known, because it concerns that one offering of Christ. Almost always people think of His crucifixion when they speak of that offering, but unfortunately that is a misunderstanding. We are hindered by Christian jargon. In the Bible the offering of Christ is never related to His death on the cross. It is in Christian jargon. When people say we are redeemed by the offering of Christ, they think of His death on the cross. Yet the cross is not an altar. If He was offered there, the cross would have been an altar, and the altar would have been served by an unbelieving Jewish people—or by the Gentiles, the Romans. They would then have brought that offering, as priests. That is utterly impossible. Moreover, sacrificial animals are not killed and slaughtered on the altar. Not even Isaac, though it was a close thing. The cross is not called an altar, but a slaughter-place. We read that in Isaiah 53:7: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter. Led to the slaughter-place, other translations say.

The sacrificial animal is killed and slaughtered, prepared at the slaughter-place.

Afterwards it is brought—prepared, yes—but by then it has long been dead, brought by the priests to the altar; by those specially appointed for it. There were even some from the priestly family who were allowed to slaughter but not to offer. There is therefore an explicit difference between slaughtering and offering.

When the Bible speaks of the offering of Christ, it concerns His resurrection from the dead, at which time He is understood to have said: “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7), repeated in verse 9. Of course He came to do God’s will when He was

on earth. On earth He fulfilled God's will by dying on the cross, but here it concerns what happened afterwards, in His resurrection. Then He said: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," and then He offered Himself to the God who raised Him from the dead. Thereupon His God and Father appointed Him as Firstborn and as High Priest and King after the order of Melchisedec—which, according to the preceding chapters, He became in His resurrection and not before. It even says that before then it was impossible, for the priesthood was not of Judah. So it can hardly be misunderstood, yet we are stuck with a certain jargon from which we must break free.

When it says: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" and "a body hast thou prepared me" (Hebrews 10:5), we should understand that it does not concern the body prepared in Mary's womb, but the body prepared in His resurrection. More than that, it is the body of which we are part. We are not speaking of the body of Jesus, but of the body of Christ, the resurrection body of Christ, so to speak. That it includes us is precisely what is said here.

"A body hast thou prepared me"—what body? It is that body in which we are sanctified. Hebrews 10:9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

He comes to do the will of God, and in that will of God we are—or become—sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Once for all: once and for ever.

He offered His body, which was prepared for Him, and thereby we too are offered and thus sanctified.

His body was prepared (Hebrews 10:5), but in verse 14 it says... 14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Now translating consistently: For by one offering he hath prepared for ever them that are sanctified. We, then. The offering of Christ consisted in His applying for a function. He received that function too, and since we are members of His body and have partaken of the risen Christ, we are therefore in Him, with Him, and through Him also offered and have part in that prepared body, and in Christ are made kings and priests unto God and His Father (Revelation 1:6). Prepared and perfected are therefore often the same. In the original it is often the same word, though not here in Hebrews 10. 1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

That God—make you perfect, prepare you. Stablish, strengthen, and settle all carry the sense of strength but also immovability. Apparently "make perfect" here has the same thrust. Then they are four synonyms, introduced by this "make perfect." So if you are perfectly equipped, perfectly prepared, then you are firm and strong and settled.

Back to 2 Corinthians 13. 11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Be glad, be perfect, be of good comfort.

As already explained earlier, this word occurs many times in chapter 1. There it is drawn from the Old Testament concept of "comfort." Comfort has to do with the New Covenant. It is even one of the terms designating the New Covenant and certainly one of its essential characteristics.

Comfort has to do with replacement. Something new comes—but also something better—in place of the old that has passed away.

Comfort in the Old Testament is also translated as “repent”: It repented the Lord. Then He takes away the old and puts something better in its place.

The idea of this expression here is at any rate that the wish is expressed that things may go better with the Corinthians—at least better than in their present circumstances. Of course it also carries the higher meaning that they should live under the principles of the New Covenant instead of those carnal principles under which the Corinthians lived. In Greek, comfort (parakaleo: para = beside, kaleo = to call) means “to call alongside.” Hence the Paraclete is the Comforter who is called alongside. In Latin that is the advocate: the one called alongside.

This expression is used for these Corinthians who are divided by definition. They lived according to the flesh, and the result is divisions among them.

The concept of comfort implies that people come together, that they form a unity. That is also the thought we associate with comfort, for when we are comforted it means someone comes to us or makes contact. The term denotes fellowship. The old that passes away is by definition a situation of division, of separation; the new that comes in its place is therefore also by definition a matter of unity and fellowship. That is also characteristic of the Old and New Covenants. Under the Old Covenant there is strife and division, falsehood; under the New Covenant there is grace and truth and therefore unity.

The next word in verse 11 therefore follows naturally: be of one mind. These are overlapping concepts. From one you come to the other. Joy often also has to do with unity, with fellowship. Be perfect. Then there is unity too, if only within the believer himself; he is one, whole.

Be of good comfort—that is included too.

Be of one mind: we find this sort of short sentences also in Romans 12, the first time we find such sentences in the New Testament.

Romans 12:15

Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.

16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

Be of the same mind one toward another. “One toward another” might perhaps have been omitted, but it is there and thereby confirms the thought that it concerns being of one mind among believers, so you do not think we must be of one mind with those outside. We are separated from the world and therefore certainly not of one mind with the world.

Being of one mind one toward another is promoted by not minding high things, whatever those may be. That is a curse in society and even seems Calvinistic. You must be a good steward and develop the gifts you have (meaning natural aptitude) as far and as high as possible. It is therefore a Christian virtue to study as long and as broadly as possible. Whether you then make anything of it in life is in our culture measured only by material wealth. That is then regarded as Christian. Yet that is not biblical. Of course there are reasons to be adduced for developing your qualities and talents, but to say that you must go as high and far as possible? More arguments can be found for precisely not doing so. It is better to remain within your limits, so that you do not run into those limits. That is always a painful, disappointing, disillusioning matter.

Mind not high things, therefore. Moreover, the higher you go, the fewer people there are. Right at the top it is lonely by definition, but beneath that you find only strife, for if you

want to go still higher, it can only be at someone else's expense. That "at someone else's expense" is the curse of our society. It comes at the expense of being of one mind.

Romans 15:5

Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus:

Likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. It is not about being likeminded in yourselves. There are many believers who are likeminded and very glad about it. They probably thank the Lord for it too. After all, you have to express your self-satisfaction somehow and thank the Lord for it. They are likeminded, that cannot be denied, but whether they are likeminded according to Christ is another question. Having the same mind and the same sentiment does not mean much. It means something only when it is according to Christ and directed towards Him. Our mind should be directed to the Lord, to serve Him and thereby praise and glorify Him. By serving Him and in our lives listening to Him and living out what He reveals to us in His Word. That is being likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus. The result is that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.⁶ That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

With one mind and one mouth = together bearing. What do we bear? We practise the truth. That is individually the content of our life, but also collectively as the Church. That word in us would have its effect outwardly, as a power that works, despite the presence of Satan and sin and all such things.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Be of one mind, live in peace.

Peace speaks of union. The parties that were divided have nonetheless been made one. In Ephesians 2 it speaks of two parties, Jews and Gentiles, who were divided but have become one, insofar as they are in Christ, the middle wall of partition having been broken down. That is, the wall that made separation.

For he is our peace, who hath made both one (Ephesians 2:11–16).

That is therefore in Christ. It concerns unity. Hence peace is also here in 2 Corinthians 13:11. All the terms mentioned there speak of unity. They are different concepts in themselves, yet they have this in common. Actually everything virtuous carries that meaning. Virtue always has to do with fellowship, with connectedness and care for one another. Vice, on the other hand, always has to do with strife, with opposing interests. We find these concepts also in Acts 2. It was indeed Pentecost there, but the message was that of Easter. Instead of preaching that they must be born again, it says there: "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Yet that is the same.

There was a matter of signs of the Spirit and signs of tongues as of fire. They began to speak with other tongues. Fire is also a recognised figure of the Holy Ghost: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire (Luke 3:16). When Peter is allowed to explain what happened on this day and what those signs represent, he begins with a Scripture reading from Joel 2...Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:

The idea is that God has now begun to do this. That this prophecy is now being fulfilled—not in the sense of completed on this day, but that a beginning was made with it then. Peter explains it more fully later and then speaks of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He calls this that the Lord Jesus Christ received the Spirit. He received Spirit and He rose from the dead, by which he said that those things are the same. That those things are the same becomes clear when you know that Spirit primarily means life: Spirit and life, Spirit, namely life. So it also stands in Acts 2... Acts 2:31

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.³² This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.³³ Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

“Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted” is a reference to Psalm 110: Sit thou at my right hand. That psalm is therefore a prophecy of the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. This psalm is quoted many times in the New Testament. “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost.” It does not read as though they are two different things, but as one thing. That is what it is. He was dead, but received Spirit, namely life. New life, Holy Ghost. A life devoted to the Father who gave that life. The promise of the Holy Ghost is the same as the promise of new life and therefore of regeneration, with the addition that in John 1—or at any rate in John 3—you read of being born again of God, or of the Spirit. One must be born again of the Spirit. That is the same as receiving the Spirit.

The promise of the Holy Ghost = the promised Holy Ghost. “Promised” is an adjective, but to strengthen it a noun has been made of it. Not just Holy Ghost, but the Holy Ghost that was promised. The preaching in the New Testament is always based on the Old Testament. For God has fulfilled His Old Testament promises.

Having received of the Father the promised Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.

“Now” = by now, in the meantime.

Strictly speaking, He poured out that Spirit already on the first Easter day, the day of His resurrection. That also stood to reason, for the outpouring of the Spirit and resurrection from the dead are in practice one and the same thing. Accordingly, He appeared to His disciples, breathed on them, and said: “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” Since it does not say that they still had to wait until Pentecost, you may assume that they received the Holy Ghost on that very same day.

That it was seen and heard on the day of Pentecost was also not normal, but that was a sign. People saw them speaking with cloven tongues as of fire, and they heard the sound of that mighty rushing wind—or rather, they heard them speak in their own languages. Yet those were signs, for the essence of Spirit is not only life, but also that it cannot be perceived. One cannot perceive the principle of life either. Simply put, you get no further than observing proteins. From them life appears to develop, but one does not really know what life is. That is logical too, for life is not a physical or biological matter. You may perhaps observe its results and even measure them, but the thing itself cannot be perceived. Life, like the spirit, belongs to the spiritual realm.

Speaking in tongues was therefore a sign, as a proof. That the Lord appeared to His disciples was a sign of His resurrection. On Ascension Day He ascended into heaven. That event was not only a sign that He held a position at the right hand of God, but also of His return. Thus the events in Acts 2 are a sign of events that had already taken place on the first Easter day. The Lord's appearing was a sign of His resurrection, and the events on this day of Pentecost were a sign that God had indeed poured out His Spirit.

Acts 2:34

For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,

From this you see that resurrection, ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost are regarded as one whole. It is the exaltation and thereby in fact the appointment of the Lord Jesus as Christ, as Messiah. Hence it is rather disastrous when people view the Lord as One who was always already the Son of God and who was always already the Messiah. Then you lose these most important events in all of world history. And that is precisely what happens in practice. It is not for nothing that the whole of Hebrews 1 and part of Hebrews 2 go into detail about that exaltation of Christ. A series of Old Testament Scripture passages are quoted in that connection: that He was made so much better than the angels, for unto which of the angels said He ever, Thou art my Son? He hath inherited a more excellent name than they, and so on. That is to say, it is a situation that was only then realised, in and after His resurrection. That is what we live out of. What is preached here is that this has indeed happened and that thereby the New Covenant has dawned.

On the basis of this explanation and on the basis of these signs the apostle Peter says...³⁶ Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

By "all the house of Israel" must be understood all twelve tribes of Israel, and not only the Jews. For this concerns Old Testament promises regarding the New Covenant. Those promises were not made only to the Jews, but to the whole house of Israel. It was indeed proclaimed here to the Jews, but as Paul said, God now commandeth all men every where to repent (Acts 17:30)—not only among the Jews, but among the whole house of Israel and even among the Gentiles.

God hath made Him both Lord and Christ, then. This means that He was not so before. He was made so in His resurrection. The terminology of King and High Priest is not mentioned here. Ultimately those are also symbolic terms, drawn from the Old Testament priestly institutions, which likewise had a largely symbolic function.

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. It does not quite read that way, but that is the thrust: this Jesus, whom ye have crucified—God has afterwards appointed Him both Lord and Christ.³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

It could also have been: Repent, and ye shall be born again. It could even have been: Repent, and ye shall be raised up together with Him and seated together with Him in the heavenlies. But of course you cannot say everything at once, so he said: Repent, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Whether he actually did not use those other expressions we do not know. It could well be, though it is not stated here. But all these

Bible accounts (that applies to all historical writing in any case) are merely extracts of everything that took place. They are summaries in which the most important things are mentioned. They are always incomplete, yet we know that Peter at any rate said this: Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. He said that because it was the day of Pentecost. That determines your choice of words.³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. You now immediately know what the promise was, and since it is Pentecost it is called the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon all flesh. It is unto you and to your children (subsequent generations), so Peter evidently knew very well that the situation he had become involved in would last for some generations yet (our dispensation, then). And to all that are afar off—drawn from Joel 2, but also from Isaiah: all that are afar off, even to the ends of the earth.

The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off. God commandeth all men every where to repent, said Paul in Acts 17:30. Even as many as the Lord our God shall call. God calls people somewhere. The question is: where to? The answer stands in verse 47:47 ...

And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Someone once filled in “the church” here (we shall return to that later). That is fair enough, but that is not how it is formulated here originally. It originally read: the Lord added daily those that were being saved. The word “church” first appears in Acts in chapter 5:11.

Acts 5:11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. And believers were the more added to the Lord. That is the proper order of the words. The little word “that” is in the wrong place, which gives a wrong impression. For here it says that they were added to the Lord. Who were added to the Lord? Those who believed. The translators did not properly grasp that truth. They made it: there were more and more added to the church. Who? Those who believed in the Lord. That is true enough, but that is not what it says. They were added to the Lord. The church is therefore called the Lord here. That is not so strange, for the Lord said to Paul: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” In his distress he then cried: “Who art thou, Lord?” Why was he persecuting Him? Paul even had to ask who He was. He was persecuting the church, but that is the Lord, as the body of Christ.

Thus more and more were added to the Lord, those who believed—or as Acts 2:47 puts it, the Lord added daily those that were being saved.

Added to what? To the church, we now know. Who were added? Those that were being saved. Or, according to verse 38, those who repented. What does salvation consist in? Receiving the Holy Ghost, for that is what it is called here in Acts 2. Those who received the Spirit were thereby added to the Lord, for those who are being saved are—or become—added to the Lord. They become members of the body of Christ, are planted together in the likeness of His death and in the likeness of His resurrection—and of course His ascension.

They would receive the Spirit. God had promised that He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Peter says that Jesus received that Spirit, for God raised Him from the dead. Thereby He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. That Jesus, who

received this as the First, has now poured it forth. It is a well-known biblical truth that God gives blessings to the Lord Jesus Christ and He gives them to us. Hence we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. One of those blessings is that we have been sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Acts 2:41

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

There were added about three thousand souls that day. Added to what? The translators filled in: unto them. That is true enough, but in reality they were added to the Lord, for they received the Spirit of the Lord—or the Spirit of Christ—and thereby the life of Christ. Thereby one is planted together with Christ and thus added to the Lord. In other words, when we come to faith, we are given by God the Father to God the Son (with apologies for such expressions; John 17:6). In John 17 the Lord speaks of those whom Thou (God the Father) hast given Me (the Lord Jesus Christ). Believers are given to the Son. On the other hand the Lord Jesus said: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (John 6:44). That text is used for the doctrine of election. Why not? It is only a question of what one understands by election. When we have come to faith, then on that ground we are chosen and are drawn to—or given to—the Son, who draws us also in practice out of this present evil world and who unites us also in practice with Himself, so that we become likeminded one toward another according to Christ.

There were added about three thousand souls that day...⁴² And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

In short, what were they? Likeminded. That was what was lacking among the Corinthians. They were divided. They had their own individual and group interests. Hence those divisions among them.

Those first Christians in Acts 2 continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine. This statement is therefore not merely applicable to the first few days after Pentecost, but at least to the first few years afterwards. Otherwise it makes no sense to say that they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine. They first had to learn that doctrine. Only afterwards can one possibly speak of continuing stedfastly in it. So it concerns at least a number of years. We too should of course continue stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Continuing stedfastly in breaking of bread does not necessarily mean continuing stedfastly in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It may be that in Christian jargon the term “breaking of bread” is the expression for the Lord’s Supper, because we no longer use the term for anything else and moreover have now learned to eat with knife and fork, yet in the Bible that is far from always the case. Breaking of bread simply concerns meals, common life. There are quite a few Scripture passages in which such expressions are not used at all in the literal sense, or scarcely in the literal sense. And when it is used in the literal sense, it still concerns the figurative meaning. Namely, that one sits at one table and thus lives within a certain fellowship of life. That, incidentally, is also what the celebration of the Lord’s Supper represents. Yet whether this concerns the Lord’s Supper is still very much open to question. It could be, but it is not

necessarily the meaning. It simply means that they ate together.⁴⁴ And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

They were together. They were therefore likeminded. It does not mean that they were together in the assembly, but that they formed one fellowship.

They had all things common—evidently in the sense of shared. There again is that likemindedness.⁴⁵ And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

They also cared for one another in material respects. That is in itself nothing special, because something similar was also regulated in the law under the Old Covenant. The whole society, including the economy, was directed towards the well-being of everyone. Our society is not; it is directed towards the enrichment of everyone. That is something different from well-being. Human well-being has nothing to do with money. The English are indeed comparatively rather wealthy. On average that is certainly so. But if you ask about the well-being of the average English person, you come to quite different conclusions. And now do not say that complaining is a English ailment; they do not feel well. Not because there is no money, but because other things are lacking. You may then say that things are going well with land and people, but things are not going well at all with land and people. The land is going to the Philistines. That is another word for perdition. You can ask the Philistines about that, for if it is up to them, we are indeed going to perdition.

Those believers cared for one another, also materially. They formed a unity, of course within the Church. Not for the world. They did not give a few billion to Greece (not too serious, but it is clear what it concerns). The last thing one should cut back on is development aid, for that still makes us feel somewhat grand when we give something away to others. So we give it to our enemies, to those who constantly threaten us and who will indeed ensure that the whole of Western culture goes to the Philistines, also materially.

It concerns the responsibility one simply has within a limited circle. There are limits to that (within the Church) to restrict those responsibilities. For us those responsibilities apply first of all within the Church, mutually. That is described here in those few words. That would be characteristic of the Church.⁴⁶ And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,

Fellowship (verse 42), together and common (verse 44), and now with one accord. That means they bore responsibility.

Continuing daily with one accord in the temple. What did they do there? Let themselves be taught, of course. Acquire knowledge, for that is what the temple is for: the temple is the library. There the word is preserved, and in particular the Word of God. They therefore practised the truth.

Breaking bread from house to house = they sought one another out. Breaking bread is a figure of unity. That is still so now, also in connection with the Lord's Supper. Whether they also celebrated the Lord's Supper then is not known. Perhaps they did, but it makes little difference anyway, for the meaning remains the same. It is the expression of connectedness.

They ate together with gladness and singleness of heart. That is to say, without ulterior motives. Singleness is simplicity. Singleness of heart, directed solely to the Lord: Be of

the same mind one toward another according to Christ Jesus. That is the unity of the Church.

Singleness of heart = what is in the mind, what one really wants. That should be to serve the Lord, and that is a matter of humility.

47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

They had favour with all the people. This means that they had favour for all the people. Prepositions are always rather difficult. The meaning is not that the people were favourably disposed towards the Church, but that the Church was favourably disposed towards the people. They had favour for the people. That Jewish people needed all the favour they could get from them. They had crucified the Lord Jesus, and these are the ones who believe in Him as the Risen One. They could, so to speak, have carried out an act of revenge. Instead they had favour for the people and preached that too, with the result that the Lord added daily those that were being saved.

The word “church” is introduced here. That has a somewhat broader background.

Normally the word “church” was used, but in the days of the KJV the church was of course the Roman Catholic Church. A word written with a capital letter and claimed by a human institution, by an institute, which made that word unpalatable to Protestants. So the translators needed another word, and that had to be introduced somewhere in the Bible. That happens here, so that the word “church/assembly” is inserted here. The KJV translators did not invent that, but Luther did. The Luther translation is older than the KJV, and he indeed uses this word: Church, from the Greek word ekklesia. Literally translating that word is difficult; it would become “the called-out ones,” or “the gathering,” or “the assembly,” terms drawn from the Old Testament. But they chose “Church,” because that word reasonably renders the essence of ekklesia. The Church is a gathering of people whom God has gathered. He sets them together in one household, thanks to Psalm 68, and makes them into one temple, or one body, in which they are joined to one another. They are therefore together, have received common blessings, and should practise the truth with one accord, and so on. That is then also Paul’s final recommendation to the Corinthians, in somewhat different words: Be glad, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Be of one mind also corresponds perfectly with a text you might not immediately think of, namely Hebrews 10:25. That is a notorious verse.

Hebrews 10:25

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The common explanation is that we should above all attend our assembly on Sunday. Against the day approaching—for example on Saturday—you must still strongly urge one another to come to that assembling of ourselves together. But what assembling of ourselves together is it about then? Here, or on the other side of the Channel, a few hundred metres to the south? There was also a church there, of a slightly different persuasion. They thought that had to be done too. But they also thought we were not allowed to come there. With that “ourselves” in our assembling of ourselves together you apparently do not belong.

Yet it is not at all about going to church. In chapter 10 you have arrived at the second practical application of this epistle. An epistle in which we as believers are called to live

above all under the New Covenant and that we as believers simply belong together, because we are all redeemed out of the house of bondage, namely Egypt. Just as Israel was literally redeemed out of the slavery of Egypt, so we too are literally redeemed from slavery—but now not from Egypt, but from sin, death, and law; from the Old Covenant of the law, then. So far even a Calvinist can follow that. We all take our distance from that, and that is actually what is said here. We should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We should therefore come together and not forsake it. Yet that assembling is at the throne of grace, as it was formulated in the first practical application of Hebrews, the last part of chapter 4.

Hebrews 4:14

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

We have that great high priest, and we should hold fast our profession.

This high priest can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, for He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. That is to say, without failing, without missing the mark. Sin is etymologically 100% related to “without.” He was tempted, yet without stumbling.

Let us therefore—flowing from the foregoing—come boldly, draw near, unto the throne of grace. “Come” or “draw near” also carries from the Hebrew the meaning of offering (korban). One draws near to God to offer. That is therefore one and the same term. Just as under the Old Covenant one was expected to draw near to the ark of the testimony (ultimately that amounts to drawing near to the ark of the covenant), so under the New Covenant one should draw near to the throne of grace.

Solomon, who once built the temple, said that if you do draw near to the Lord, to the house of God, you should not primarily do so to offer Him something—though you should do that too—but he adds that every fool does that. You should therefore not do it to bring the sacrifice of fools. Under the New Covenant we also offer something, namely ourselves, but besides that we should listen. Solomon said...

Ecclesiastes 5:1

Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God, and be more ready to hear, than to give the sacrifice of fools: for they consider not that they do evil.

The Lord would speak to the people from between the cherubims upon the mercy seat of the ark. If you draw near to that mercy seat, it should be to listen. This same truth is illustrated by the tables of stone preserved in the ark. The Word of God, then. Well, a symbol of it. But it illustrates that God would speak from there to the people. Come therefore more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools. Fools do that, you see. They draw near, bring an offering to the Lord, and then go away again. That is religion indeed, but if you do that you are evidently not right in the head.

They consider not that they do evil. What is evil about it then? That they do offer, but do not listen. One should therefore listen.

Ecclesiastes 5:2

Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few.

What do you think you are doing speaking to God? You had better not do that, but listen instead. So it remains to be seen whether if you pray a lot you are being very Christian. Not that it is not good and not that it is not biblical and not that it is not allowed, but fundamentally it is the world turned upside down. Fundamentally it is that God speaks and His servant hears. That is to say, that we listen to that Word of God. And so it says: let thy words be few...

3 For a dream cometh through the multitude of business; and a fool's voice is known by multitude of words.

It does not say that the dream comes from God, but through the multitude of business. If a dream does come from God, then that is quite exceptional. That is outside the normal order. Insofar as prophecies come in dreams, it is a form that in some way concerns our present time, between the first and second coming of Christ. Those dreams or prophecies always have to do with the mystery. Sometimes that is perfectly clear, sometimes not, but because it is a dream you know it must concern that. Hence we do not encounter those dreams so often in the Bible. Moreover they usually concern the life of believers, or of Israelites abroad and homeless.

There were two great dreamers in the Bible. Both were called Joseph, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. Others who also dreamed now and then were Nebuchadnezzar and Pharaoh, both rulers of contemporary world empires. Completely outside the land and outside Israel. Daniel also dreamed, but that was more a continuation of Nebuchadnezzar, so to speak. That all concerns worldly matters and in particular has something to do with this present time. But normally dreams come through the multitude of business.

For as a dream cometh through the multitude of business; so the voice of the fool through the multitude of words. The more one speaks, the more foolish one becomes. Speak little, therefore.

Ecclesiastes 5:4 When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

You must not too hastily promise anything to the Lord, for the likelihood that you will be able to keep it is not great; and God holds you to it, and then you have landed yourself in a fine mess. These words are quoted by James in his epistle: Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19). The Lord Jesus Himself also said it: But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking (Matthew 6:7).

Our likemindedness can exist only when we draw near to God—not to tell Him something, but to offer ourselves and to listen to Him. Now we are back in

Hebrews 4:16

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Let us therefore—on the basis of the preceding four chapters—come boldly unto the throne of grace. The throne of grace is a term designating the ark of the covenant. Under the Old Covenant the mercy seat upon the ark was the throne of the law. From there the Lord spoke, and that had everything to do with law. We, however, live under the New

Covenant, and these are figures of that, so it is called the throne of grace. In English the throne of grace is called the mercy seat. That refers to the mercy seat.

Let us therefore come boldly—not to Aaron, but to the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. He has a throne. It is not the throne of the law, the throne of Aaron, but the throne of grace, the throne of Melchisedec—or of Christ. When you approach a throne, you know what you must do there: kneel, submit yourself to the One who sits upon that throne. Kneeling is still rather restrained, for in practice you fall prostrate with arms and legs spread out. In biblical terms that is called: He fell on his face. Actually that is a picture of death, after which the One who sits upon the throne says: “Arise.” Or He extends the sceptre, but that is a figure of life. It is therefore death and resurrection. People no longer know that, and because they no longer know it, these things remain tradition and are thereby preserved for us. We receive there before the throne of grace mercy and grace, and we receive life there.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need—when He deems it necessary. Some people claim that God always cares for you and always gives you strength, always determines your way, but that is Hinduism and Buddhism; that is simply fatalism. You are part of one great world; that is one cosmic whole, with all sorts of parts that together form one great machine—which, incidentally, serves no purpose. It all turns, and in the end it will all come right. That is fatalism and removes responsibility from man and, where applicable, from the believer. People then also no longer take responsibility for their own lives and moreover place themselves above everyone else who does not have that experience. That applies therefore to the whole rest of the world, for they do not have those experiences, and if we do have them, the likelihood is great that we were not dealing with the Lord but with Baal—which, incidentally, is also translated “lord.” That is not God, the Creator of heaven and earth, but the prince of this world, or his staff. Yet the Lord has given us something; He gave us a pound and said: “Occupy till I come.” He calls us to account only when He returns. That is the norm. Should you happen to get into difficulties along the way, then the Lord will with the temptation also make a way to escape. He will not disown us in this life. Nevertheless we ourselves are responsible for our own lives; only, the Lord watches over us and gives us what we need. First of all that pound. Beyond that He would indeed care for us. We are joined to Him, and no one can pluck us out of His hand. All those things stand in the Bible, yet He also gives us commands and responsibilities, for we are on the way to our adoption as sons. For that purpose we are helped in time of need.

That likemindedness expresses itself in our all drawing near to that throne of grace, and that is our assembling of ourselves together. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together. It is formulated that way because in the preceding chapters there was explicit mention of our assembling of ourselves together, of our coming boldly unto the throne of grace. That stood in chapter 4, after which in chapters 5–10 it is explained how things actually stand with Christ, the High Priest of the New Covenant after the order of Melchisedec. That all concerns our assembling of ourselves together. He has entered into the sanctuary; He is seated upon the throne of grace, and we should follow Him. In another biblical picture He is the good Shepherd; He has gone through the door, and His sheep hear His voice, are called by name, and they follow Him (John 10). That is exactly the same truth. We follow Him, and there we meet one another with joy. That is our only true assembling of ourselves together. 2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be

perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Live in peace; that is, as said, in fact the same, with the same consequences. We are inclined to say that peace is the opposite of war, and of course that is so, but the great weight of the concept of “peace” lies in the union and fellowship that people have with one another. Peace is not merely the absence of strife or war. Then it would strictly speaking be a negative concept. Then peace is not this and not that. More important is what it is: fellowship.

You find that also in Ephesians 2, which we have already briefly mentioned.

He—Christ—is our peace, who hath made both one. He has taken away what separated us, the middle wall of partition. He has broken down that wall. Literally there was such a wall, which still plays a role in the book of Acts. Paul clearly indicates that by the middle wall of partition he understood the law. That is also stated: the law of commandments contained in ordinances. The law is always illustrative for the New Covenant; it is an occasion for a better hope. But law in the sense of living under it, under the commandments and ordinances—that separated Jew from Gentile. Yet Paul says that God has taken that out of the way and nailed it to the cross. That means that through the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus an end came to the Old Covenant and thus to the dominion of the law.

He is our peace, and therefore: “Live in peace.” It means at any rate that we should not be directed towards mutual strife. That is easy enough, for you should also first live in peace with the Lord.

Romans 5:1

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the first thing mentioned. After we have come to faith and have been acquitted by God (to justify = to acquit), we have peace with God. If you have not come to faith and thus have not been acquitted, then you live on terms of war with God. Every religion in which God is the figure to be feared demonstrates lack of faith. Even in so-called Christianity, where people are afraid of God, that is a demonstration of lack of faith. If you believe, then you are justified by God and have peace with God and can also come boldly to Him to offer yourself to Him there. Yet that does not please the gentlemen theologians, so they say the Bible is unclear on that point. Yet the Bible is perfectly clear about it.

Peace should be characteristic of our lives. Mentioning it is important enough that we should remember it at all times.

Romans 12:16

Be of the same mind one toward another.

That is repeated in chapter 15, but there it says that we should be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus (Romans 15:5).

The next words in verse 16 have everything to do with that... 16 Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.

That is completely contrary to prevailing ideas, for you must above all strive to reach the very highest.

Be not wise in your own conceits; you should not be self-willed, but humble. 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Not only with all believers, but with all men. If possible, as much as lieth in you. These words imply that there are limits to that peace, for in principle we live on terms of war with the world. We are a threat to the world, at least in their eyes. And if all is well we do not insist on it. The reverse happens, of course. They have trouble with us because we do not go along with them. We do not join in the hypes and the madness of the day, the madness of the year, and the madness of the age. That strife breaks out now and then, and for us it remains that we ought to obey God rather than men. That sometimes produces conflict situations. Yet that does not detract from the principle stated here: live peaceably with all men.

It does not say that we must make peace, for from God's point of view we are in a position of peace. That peace we should preserve.

The same applies to that famous concept of "unity." We should not come to unity, but endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). That unity is there. Christians quite often call for us to come to unity. First they establish that there is division, and perhaps that is so, but it is the wrong starting point. It is the wrong standpoint from which to view things. Nevertheless, people have established that that unity is not there and therefore we must do our best to make unity of it. As long as you keep busy with that, you keep denying that that unity exists. For if it existed, you would not need to ensure that unity comes about. Because you do not acknowledge that that unity exists, it will never come to anything. As long as you think you must break down church walls, there are church walls. The different currents in the different churches correspond to the different currents in philosophy. That has to do with human nature: one leans to the left and another to the right. But churches and the history behind them, the doctrines and so on—you need know nothing further of that. You must know what the Bible teaches; you must know what the Lord has revealed. That takes time, and it will also take a while before it has practical effect in your life, but the point is that we should be humble and submit ourselves to the Word of God. There we find one another, and from that position we should keep the unity, for it is there. And we should live in peace, as far as that is possible.

In that connection it then says...

Romans 12:19

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Some say: "You can always be humble and let yourself be walked over, but that is not just, is it?" No, but so what? All right, then it is not just. Justice will come. Judicial mills grind slowly; God's do too. To Him belongs vengeance; He will repay. That it happens rather late in your eyes may be so, but in our life in this world we are on the way to eternity, and if it takes rather a long time in this world, what does that matter in relation to eternity? God has promised that He will do it, ultimately and completely on the Last Day. That day is really coming. Therefore: avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.

The advantage for us is that we do not have to do it ourselves and do not have to give our last pennies to obtain our rights here, because we simply have a strong sense of justice, just like our dear Lord Himself. That last is incidentally a crooked argument. If the Lord is just, then He sees to justice; we do not need to do that. Our time is yet to come. That is biblical. Very many psalms have no other content than this. The psalmist says: "My righteousness is with the Lord," or "With thee is my righteousness," or "Avenge me of my

adversaries.” The Lord does that too; He has revealed it. That releases us from the task of bringing forth justice and gives us the opportunity to live in peace nevertheless. This applies under all circumstances; only in some circumstances we cannot escape it, because we are indeed still stuck with one foot in this world. Nevertheless, this is the fixed principle. The intention of it is the following...

Romans 12:21

Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.

This does not mean that you must eradicate evil from this world, but that you must ignore the evil in your life and abide by the good. That is to say, seek the Lord. We then all sing together,

Where we leave such things to the Lord and then conduct ourselves humbly, both in the world and among believers, there we keep peace with one another.

Live in peace, for He is our peace. Look up the word “peace” in the Bible sometime. You will then see that it is one of the characteristics of the New Covenant. This means that we who live under the New Covenant indeed have peace—with God and with one another. The battle has been fought, and we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us in Christ.

Paul adds yet another layer when he says: And the God of love and peace shall be with you. Everyone knows that God is love, but He is also a God of peace, for love and peace have in common the urge to, the tendency to, the power for unity. That is the opposite of the division and strife of the old creation. Yet where we have become new creatures in Christ, there we have part in that love and that peace. Those are divine attributes, or divine properties. God is Light, which reveals and thus connects and makes communication possible. God is love. That is the same story. That is fellowship, connection, communication. Life and peace are ultimately also exactly the same. They are overlapping concepts that are all designations of God as such. The God of love and peace—and therefore also the God of patience and consolation (from Romans 15:5). Patience in the sense of devotion to: passion.

God is therefore called here the God of love and peace. Both are dominant properties of God. Elsewhere it simply says: God is love, as a metaphor.

The God of love and peace shall be with you. That is a promise. It applies where the beginning of verse 11 is in force, namely: be glad, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace. In that case the God of love and peace shall be with you. You should after all live in some way in accordance with the will of God. Those are weighty terms, but it is difficult to formulate them otherwise. You must after all in some way correspond to the good and acceptable will of God, to be able to lay claim to grace and mercy and help in time of need. Or, as it stands here: Be glad, and so on, and the God of love and peace shall be with you. That first is the condition. You must meet certain things.

Elsewhere it says: If we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12). That does not concern the future, but the present. When we in this life take no notice of the Lord, then He also takes no notice of us. Why should He? But if we in our lives serve Him, then He will look upon us. Then He will not deny us, but on the contrary be faithful to His promises. So it is formulated here too. Whether God will be with you is therefore indeed conditional.

He has given us eternal life. That life should actually be lived, and then He is indeed with us.

Philippians 4:6 -7

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Here it is not promised that He will do what you ask, but that the intention is for you to let your requests be made known unto God. There is no trace here of any advisory role towards God, as though we were telling God what He ought to do about it.

Let your requests be made known unto God. Do not make your heart a murder-pit towards the Lord. The result will be the peace of God, which passeth all understanding. That peace shall keep your hearts and minds. "Hearts and minds" means that the emotions are then under control, for in fact that is nearly always what it comes down to. The things we think, the things we persuade ourselves of, the dangers we see, the things we experience and that weigh upon us—these in the natural world quickly lead to strife. Discontent in a person, in whatever form, usually expresses itself outwardly. People need to vent. Here it says: Let your requests be made known unto the Lord. "Tell it to Jesus," as the Singing Sisters used to sing. Then you keep peace.

Back to 2 Corinthians 13.

2 Corinthians 13:11

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

The God of peace shall be with you, and therefore peace shall be with you. One of the traditional blessings is: Peace be unto you. You now know on what ground that peace will exist.

That He is called the God of peace you find particularly at the close of the various epistles. It is a characteristic of God; for He makes peace. God is also involved in a conflict in the course of history, but that conflict does not originate with Him. More than that, the general idea—even among believers—is that God is too lax to do anything about it. Scoffers say that He is slack (2 Peter 3:4, 9). That conflict is caused by the god of this age, Satan. God Himself is love and peace. He will put an end to that conflict; He simply is not in a hurry. For He is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Where we hold to the principles of the New Covenant, there the God of love and peace shall be with us. In that situation and in that connection it then says...Greetings and benediction

2 Corinthians 13:12-14

Greet one another with an holy kiss.

13 All the saints salute you.

14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

A kiss is an expression of fellowship and on that ground has sometimes even been forbidden, taboo. In some cultures it is quite normal for people to kiss one another; in others it is not. In yet others it is completely prohibited. Kissing is after all an expression of fellowship, and that fellowship in general is taboo in some circles anyway. In Arab

countries men and women are not even allowed to touch one another in public. You have to keep a bit of distance from one another.

Yet you must view it neutrally, for a kiss is an expression of unity, of connectedness. The meaning from the Hebrew is roughly that you “eat” one another. The idea is that you merge into one another. It is therefore a symbolic gesture expressing connectedness. Whether they did it literally in those days or not has not much to do with it.

One would greet one another on the ground of the connectedness that exists in Christ. Greet one another with an holy kiss. Under the verse stand several cross-references: Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 16:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:26; 1 Peter 5:14.

The verse continues: All the saints salute you.

If you add those two sentences together, then here is precisely what our fellowship is based on, what it springs from. The kiss in the first sentence is the expression of connectedness and fellowship. The concept of “saints” in this combination expresses what that fellowship is based on, for saints are saints because they are devoted to the Lord. In that we find one another. Our fellowship lies in our serving the Lord—or at least wanting to; being directed towards that. We are holy because we are the property of the Lord and serve Him. In that our fellowship is contained.

It is no more difficult than that. These words press themselves upon one another, as it were. Of course it is simply the greeting at the end of such an epistle, but those greetings are meaningful enough. They are the expression of the connectedness of all believers with one another. Denominations and church walls—which are usually figurative in the first place—play no role whatever in the whole Bible. There is such a thing as local churches, but that is because people simply inhabit the earth in groups. From those groups you have believers who maintain contact with one another, so to speak. And so you get something like local churches. The idea of different denominations of which you can become or be a member and which are organised—that is 100% unbiblical. It does not occur. More than that, it is precisely what one is redeemed from.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

This verse has been included in certain formularies. It has become tradition to pronounce this verse at the end of what is called the church service. “Church service” is in itself already a strange word. Some think they serve God by coming together at least once a week for an hour or an hour and a half and speaking some solemn words and singing a number of solemn hymns. That is easy enough, and yes, you do not get away with it so easily. In the past it was not called a church service but a religious exercise. You came there to learn. The “exercise” has been dropped, and now it is still called the divine service or church service, or simply the service, for brevity.

What here passes for a wish is more a statement of fact, or the establishing of the situation in which every child of God lives or should live: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. That “be” is the subjunctive mood of the verb “to be.” You could also read it as “is,” but actually the whole verb is not there. In many cases the verb “to be” or “to become” is completely superfluous. Hence in many languages it is used as little as possible. That also applies to the biblical languages. In Latin such a word comes right at the end of the sentence because it means nothing: *errare humanum est* = to err is human. *Est* hangs like a tail at the end of the whole. In any case, here the word is not

there at all. So you also have every right to make it: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with you.

Whether that grace is actually with them depends on whether one is faithful to the Lord; whether one is vertically directed rather than horizontally.

You can still have a discussion about how Paul intended it, and you probably end up with “be with you.” In other words: “It is not so, but I hope for you that it will finally come to that with you there in Corinth.”

In any case, this is the description of the normal life-position of the believer. For wherever that believer goes, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is with him.

As Romans 5:1 already said: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Access = approach, drawing near, and thus—by the Hebrew meaning of the term—offering. Those are words that correspond to the words from the Epistle to the Hebrews: Seeing then that we have a great high priest... let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:21–22). Or, as Paul puts it in

Ephesians 3:12: ...

in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him
(should be: by the faith of him = by his faithfulness).

Here in Romans 5 you find the same: By whom also we have access... That is therefore implicitly the access to the throne of grace. Yet the concept of “throne” is omitted here. Here it says that we have access in him unto this grace wherein we stand. But the thrust of those words is indeed that we stand under the dominion of grace. That stands clearly over against the dominion of the law. From that we are redeemed. We do not stand in or under the law, but in grace. That is our official position. Therefore we should draw near there. You must therefore actually place yourself under it.

Hence people have for centuries been debating the extent to which grace is available or must be preached. Preachers are dismissed because they preach too great an offer of grace. For grace is there, but you must not say too much about it and not offer it too widely: “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, but that does not mean...” It is immediately undermined. Yet it is exactly as the Epistle to the Hebrews says: you must draw near unto the throne of grace. Unfortunately many believers do not do that; they draw near to the throne of the law. Outsiders, unbelievers, then also have the idea that believers stand under law. That is reinforced by the various laws, rules, and statutes of the various denominations of which they are part.

Yet it is the other way round. We stand in liberty and indeed, all things are lawful for us. Paul wrote that to the Corinthians, of all people. So it seems fitting to say it once more here at the very end of both Corinthian epistles. We should draw near unto that grace, by which also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand (Romans 5:1–2). That is to say, that there is our position; there we live under. The next chapter therefore says that we are not under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

But we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We therefore have a future expectation.

Under the law that is usually different. Under the law sins are remembered and brought to mind, from the past. But under the New Covenant of grace sins are no more remembered, as Jeremiah 31 at any rate says, and thus Hebrews 8 also, where it is quoted. We are not directed to the past, but to the future. We have hope. We therefore rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Titus 2:13

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;

We look for that blessed hope, namely the appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. That is our future expectation, and that is what we live out of.

We stand in grace. At least, we have access thereto. It should be clear that the greater part of all those New Testament epistles has no other content and serves no other purpose than to move believers also actually to place themselves under that grace. Therefore we should have boldness to draw near unto the throne of grace. In other words, we should not forsake the assembling of ourselves together.¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ with you all. That grace is the atmosphere of our life. Grace is the basis of the so-called Christian ethic.

The love of God with you all. Where grace reigns, love can also dwell. Where love dwells, the Lord commands His blessing (Psalm 133). Sometimes you think it is the other way round: where the Lord commands His blessing, there love dwells. In any case, where we live out of what the Lord gives, there love reigns and there one can also afford to love and to share one's life with others. In the Bible that is called "without fear."

Love is the power that brings to unity.

The communion of the Holy Ghost with you all. Communion is that unity. Here it is called the communion of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost is really nothing and no one other than the eternal life we have received. Think of Acts 2:33. The Spirit of God is the invisible but active power of God. That Spirit of God is invisible but becomes visible in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the Holy Ghost is also called the Spirit of Christ, and therefore He is also called the Spirit of the Lord, or simply the Spirit of God. That that Spirit is called holy is because it concerns an active power directed to God, a power in the service of God Himself. It is also His power.

Where you really encounter the expression "Holy Ghost," it always has to do with this present time, with this present dispensation of the mystery. Elsewhere it is called Spirit of God or Spirit of the Lord. "Holy Ghost" is therefore used specifically in the Bible in connection with the work God is doing today. Even when it says: Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet... You could of course say that Isaiah therefore spoke by the Holy Ghost, and that was in Old Testament times and thus had nothing to do with the Church. Yet the words of Isaiah that are then quoted do not even concern the Church, but do concern this present time, for they concern the Jewish people that has become hardened (Acts 28:25–28). Paul indeed applies those words to this present time. Then it is still called Holy Ghost. When Peter says that the men of God were moved by the Holy Ghost, it also concerns what those prophets proclaimed and in particular this present time (1 Peter 1:10–12).

John 7:38

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

39 (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

Was that Spirit not yet there then? Yes it was, but not in the sense of Holy Ghost, who is poured out and dwells in every believer, in the sense of that new life.

The above fits into no ecclesiastical dogma or doctrine, because people do not simply read what the Bible teaches, but try to obtain truth democratically, by majority vote. And that is what they have done over time.¹³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

You must also not emphasise too much that:

- the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ comes
- the love of God
- and the communion of the Holy Ghost.

For that is a misunderstanding. Then you have not properly understood that language. Here two things are simply placed alongside one another.

Grace, love, and communion are concepts that are synonymous and overlap one another to a large extent. For under grace there is love and communion possible—if only because under the opposite, the law, there is falsehood and strife. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17). This implies that law has something to do with falsehood. Not because the law is falsehood—on the contrary—but because law begets and thus brings falsehood.

Grace, love, and communion therefore belong together. They are effected by the Lord Jesus Christ, by God, or by the Holy Ghost. These too are therefore synonymous concepts. Not that they are different things or persons, but the point is precisely their unity. The problem is that among others this verse is used to point to the distinction between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, whereas the intention of this verse is precisely the opposite. They are three terms for in practice exactly the same thing. The Lord Jesus is God. For He is the express image of God's person. If you form a conception of God, then it is the conception of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what God looks like.

When the invisible, the unknowable, the abstract Godhead manifests Himself, there appears in the Old Testament in concrete form the figure of Jehovah. When He manifests Himself in the New Testament, there appears since the resurrection the Lord Jesus—indeed the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who reveals the Godhead to us.

The Lord Jesus Christ... 1 Timothy 6:15 ...which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords;¹⁶ Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

“In his times” is not once upon a time, but in his time.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who shows God. That is to say, when God shows Himself, there appears the figure of the Lord Jesus Christ. As far as God Himself is concerned, He is the One who only hath immortality and dwells in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see. What therefore has been seen of the Godhead in the course of time was always Jehovah, a manifestation, a showing forth, of the Godhead. Yet if He were to show Himself today, there would appear the Man with the scars—namely the Lord Jesus Christ. But He is God. Of Him it stands in Isaiah that there is no God beside Him. Those words are indeed applied in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, before whom every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; with a name above every name (quoted in Philippians 2:9–11). The same Lord says: I am the Saviour; I am the Redeemer, and beside me there is no saviour (Isaiah 44–45). It therefore does not concern three different things or persons, but one and the same God. That God takes form—also as literally as possible—in the person of the Lord Jesus. That God, even when that Person is

not seen, does indeed work with power in those who believe. The exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead (Ephesians 1:19–20).

That is called Spirit, for invisible power is after all called spirit. Apart from that, in John 4:24 it says that God is Spirit. He is invisible and He works. He does something, and that is power. Therefore He is Spirit.

In short, the Lord Jesus, God, and the Holy Ghost are not three different things, though you can describe them differently, but therefore it is still one and the same God. That is also generally known, for we are monotheistic, for we believe in one God. The Bible gives no occasion to divide that God into three. If you had to do that and could do it, then you would get further than three. Three is also not the designation of the Godhead, but of the promises of God. It is not the designation of the so-called Divine Trinity, for such a concept does not exist anywhere in the Bible.

Grace, love, and communion come from God, or from Jesus Christ, or from the Holy Ghost. You can simply interchange the one three with the other three. You find this sort of structure particularly in poetic literature, such as the Psalms, where two concepts are placed alongside one another, both with different terms. The order of those terms does not matter thereby. You must add them together, and thereby those things gain weight. Things like grace, love, communion, and peace belong together. They are the outworking of the same principle, and it comes from God, the Creator; from Elohim, from Adonai, from Jehovah, from Jehovah this and Jehovah that, of which there are many combinations in the Old Testament. Or simply from the Lord Jesus Christ, or from Christ, or from the Spirit of Christ. The choice of words often has an occasion; it carries a certain weight and evokes certain associations. That is probably also the intention, but it concerns one and the same principle.

In the Old Testament you encounter the expression “Holy Ghost” in only two Scripture passages. In Psalm 51, where the psalmist prays: Take not thy holy spirit from me. That is a prayer of the Lord Jesus. The other passage is Isaiah 63...

Isaiah 63:10

But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the shepherd of his flock? where is he that put his holy Spirit within him?

In both Psalm 51 and here in Isaiah 63 you read that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Messiah. These are all the Scripture passages in the Old Testament. After that you encounter the expression in the New Testament, but the meaning naturally remains the same. It is the Spirit of Christ, namely the Spirit of the Messiah. Of whom? Of the One raised from the dead, of course. Insofar as Spirit is life, it is therefore that new eternal life of Christ, which we receive by grace from God. That is offered not only that we might be born again, but also that as born-again people we might live.

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The wages = the pay, the consequence.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life. Usually people think that this concerns the idea that if you as a human live in sin, then afterwards comes judgement and death. You can of course come to faith and receive that gift of God, namely eternal

life, for God gives life. Then you are born again and saved. That last is of course biblical and therefore true, but that is not what this verse is about. For in these chapters it concerns the manner of life, the life-attitude, of believers. To them it is said that you can remain in sin, but that is not the intention. The intention is that we should yield our members as instruments of righteousness unto God. We should not serve sin and therefore do sin, but we should do righteousness and therefore serve it—namely serve the Lord.

You can indeed serve sin, but that is death. That leads not merely to death, but that is death. We are dead and by nature live in death—namely cut off from God. In death one serves sin, and vice versa: where you serve sin you live in the death of the whole old creation. If you want out of that, if you want something of that grace of God, then you should come to that life which you received when you came to faith, when you were raised up together with Christ and planted together in the likeness of His resurrection. That life should be lived. That life consists in: Be glad, be comforted, be of one mind one toward another according to Jesus Christ, and so on. That is the life of that new life. God offers that life to us by grace. The natural man cannot live like that at all. Yet we should not live as the natural man, for the intention is that we seek the Lord and serve Him. He gives us all that is necessary for that. It concerns the everyday life of believers, in which He gives us that life.

The gift of God is eternal life (to be lived). Not merely the principle of life that He gives, but the life that develops from it. That is a life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Or: that is a life through the Holy Ghost who dwells in us, or: through the power of the Spirit, or: through the power of God that works in us who believe. Those are not mere terms, but expressions used in various other Scripture passages. That is what God gives us. These chapters here in Romans concern that, but so too do the last verses of 2 Corinthians 13. Not about the work the Lord did in the past, but more especially about the work He does in the present. That is what we should live out of.

Amen.